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Rao et al.

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(54) **SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR LINKING NETWORKS TO ONE ANOTHER AND SHARING RESOURCES BETWEEN MEMBERS**

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(22) Filed: **Sep. 15, 2010**

Related U.S. Application Data

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(51) **Int. Cl.**

G06F 15/16	(2006.01)
G06Q 50/00	(2012.01)
H04L 29/06	(2006.01)
H04W 48/16	(2009.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC ***G06Q 50/01*** (2013.01); ***H04L 63/101*** (2013.01); *H04W 48/16* (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
CPC ... G06F 17/3089; H04L 51/32; H04L 12/588; H04L 63/101; H04L 12/2856; H04L 12/2859; H04L 65/4007; H04L 67/1095; H04L 67/2814; H04L 12/2818; G06Q 50/01
USPC 709/220, 227, 228, 203–204; 707/3
See application file for complete search history.

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Assistant Examiner — Benjamin M. Thieu
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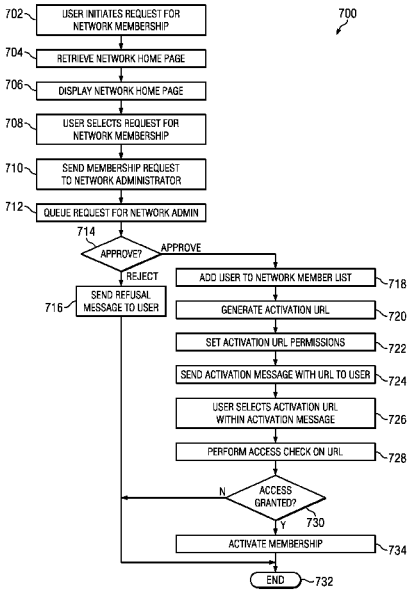
(57) **ABSTRACT**

An embodiment of a method of linking a first network to a second network includes sending, by a first network having at least one first member associated therewith, a link request message to a second network having at least one second member associated therewith. The link request message includes a request to establish a link with the second network. The first network further includes at least one resource associated therewith and accessible by the at least one first member. The method further includes receiving an acceptance message from the second network at the first network, establishing a first link between the first network and the second network in response to receiving the acceptance message, and sharing access to the at least one resource to the at least one second member of the second network.

20 Claims, 15 Drawing Sheets



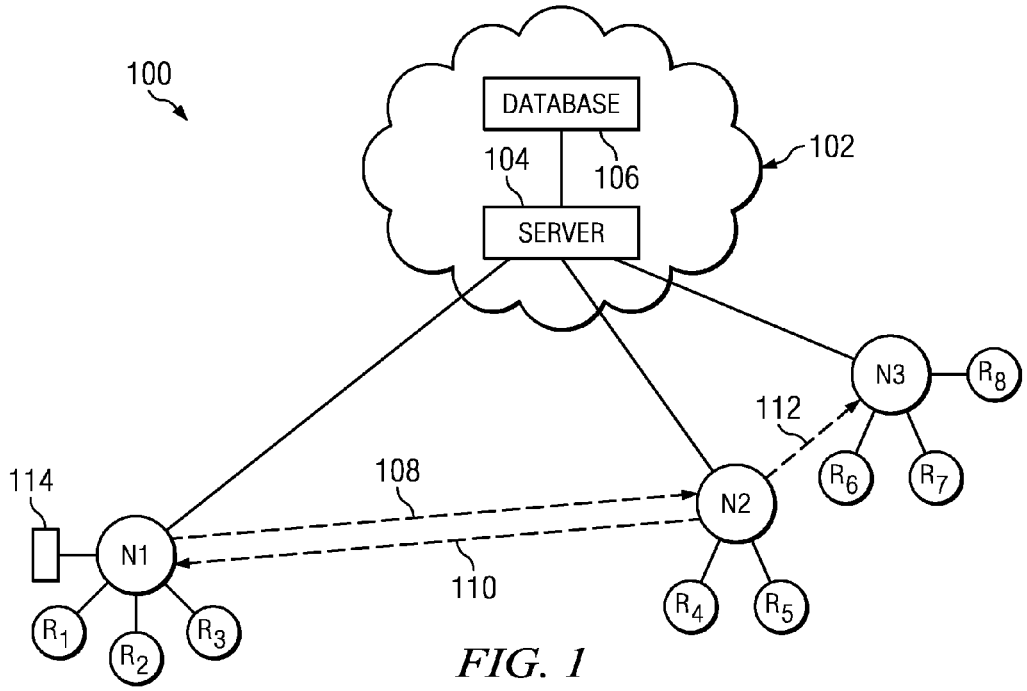


FIG. 1

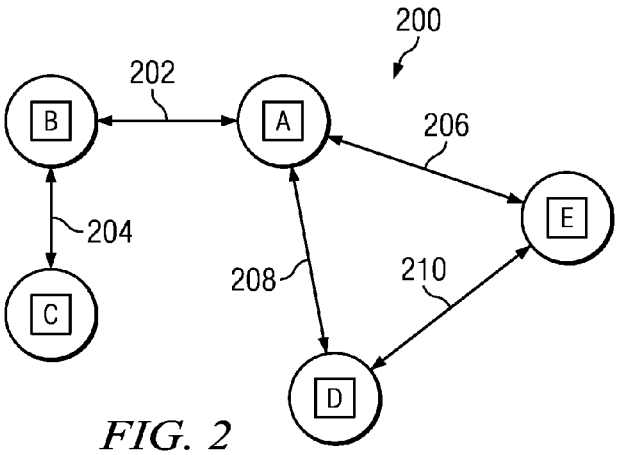


FIG. 2

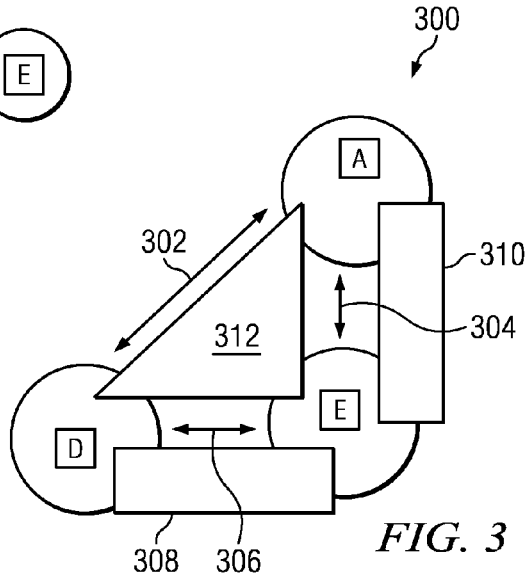


FIG. 3

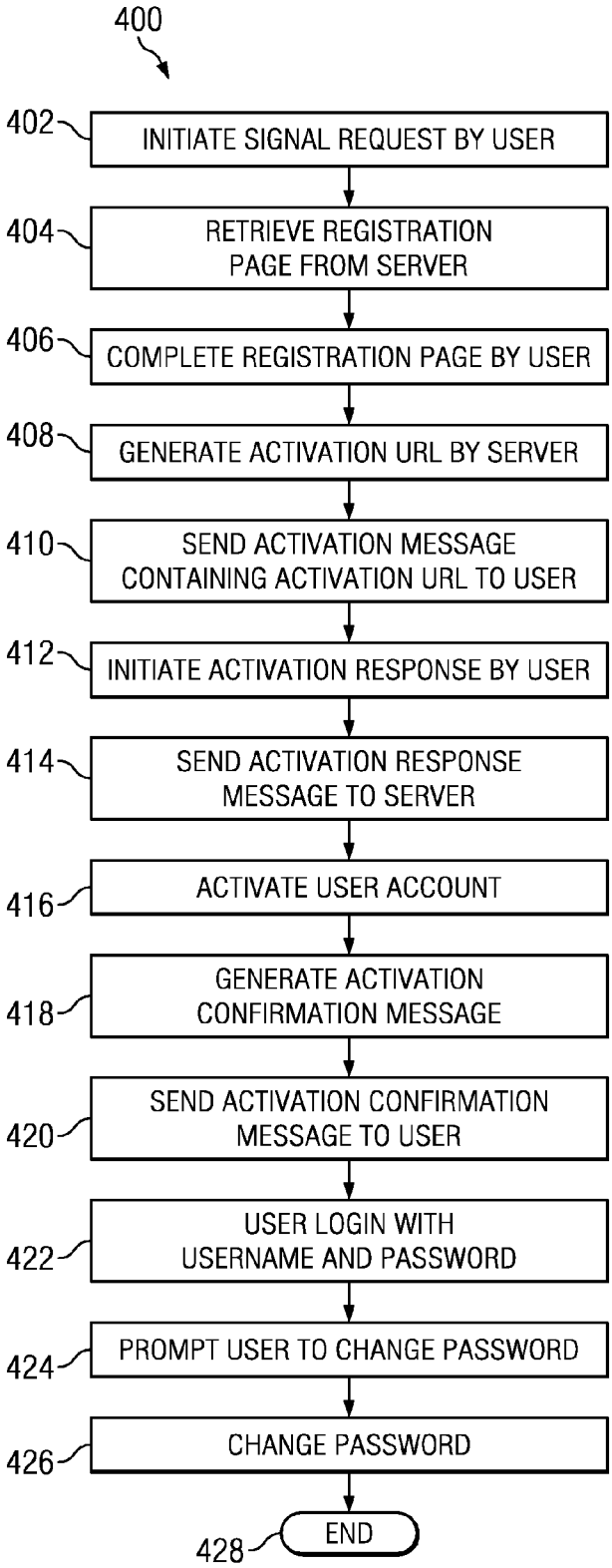

400
402
INITIATE SIGNAL REQUEST BY USER
404
RETRIEVE REGISTRATION PAGE FROM SERVER
406
COMPLETE REGISTRATION PAGE BY USER
408
GENERATE ACTIVATION URL BY SERVER
410
SEND ACTIVATION MESSAGE CONTAINING ACTIVATION URL TO USER
412
INITIATE ACTIVATION RESPONSE BY USER
414
SEND ACTIVATION RESPONSE MESSAGE TO SERVER
416
ACTIVATE USER ACCOUNT
418
GENERATE ACTIVATION CONFIRMATION MESSAGE
420
SEND ACTIVATION CONFIRMATION MESSAGE TO USER
422
USER LOGIN WITH USERNAME AND PASSWORD
424
PROMPT USER TO CHANGE PASSWORD
426
CHANGE PASSWORD
428
END

FIG. 4

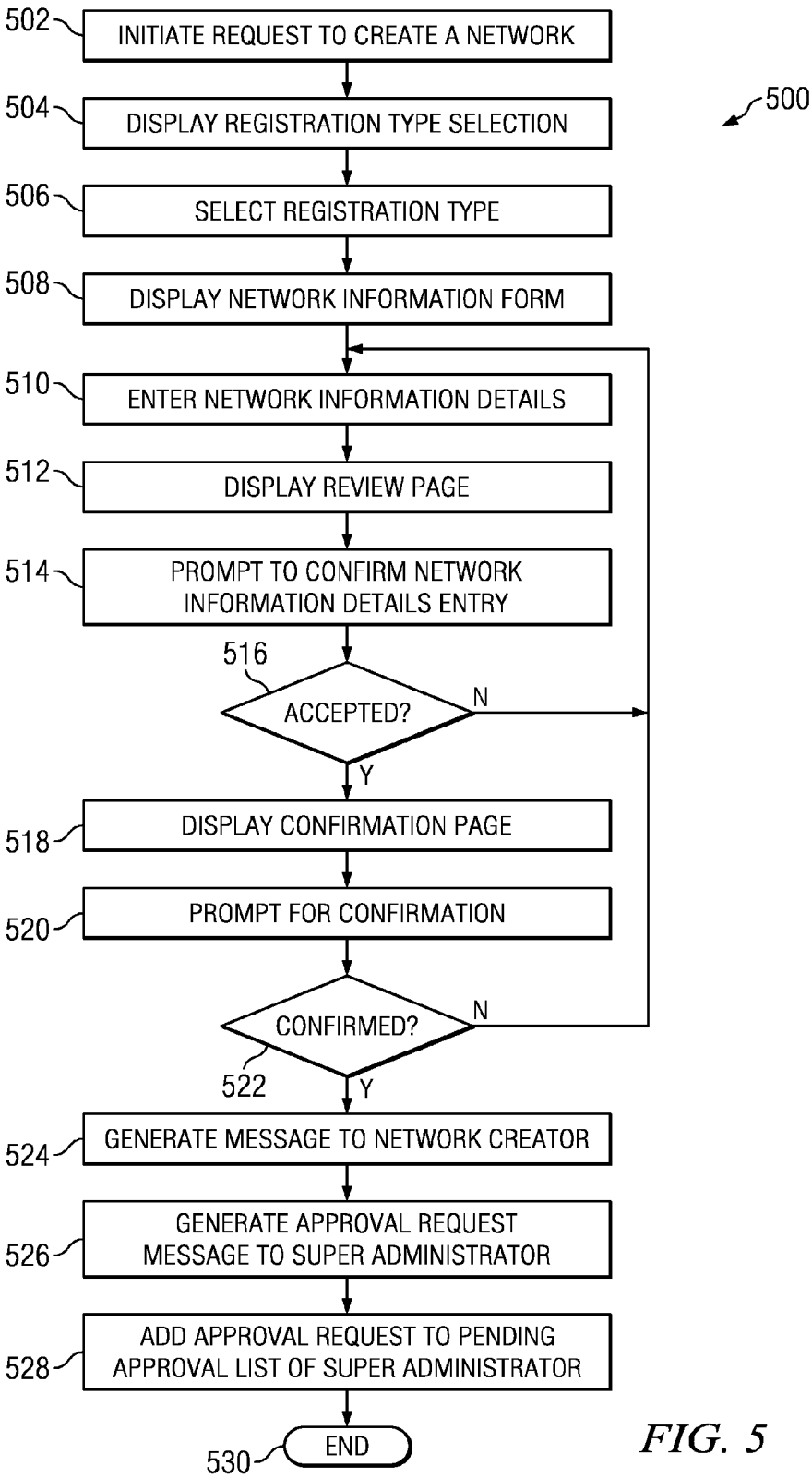

502
INITIATE REQUEST TO CREATE A NETWORK
504
DISPLAY REGISTRATION TYPE SELECTION
500
506
SELECT REGISTRATION TYPE
508
DISPLAY NETWORK INFORMATION FORM
510
ENTER NETWORK INFORMATION DETAILS
512
DISPLAY REVIEW PAGE
514
PROMPT TO CONFIRM NETWORK INFORMATION DETAILS ENTRY
516
ACCEPTED?
N
Y
518
DISPLAY CONFIRMATION PAGE
520
PROMPT FOR CONFIRMATION
CONFIRMED?
N
522
Y
524
GENERATE MESSAGE TO NETWORK CREATOR
526
GENERATE APPROVAL REQUEST MESSAGE TO SUPER ADMINISTRATOR
528
ADD APPROVAL REQUEST TO PENDING APPROVAL LIST OF SUPER ADMINISTRATOR
530
END

FIG. 5

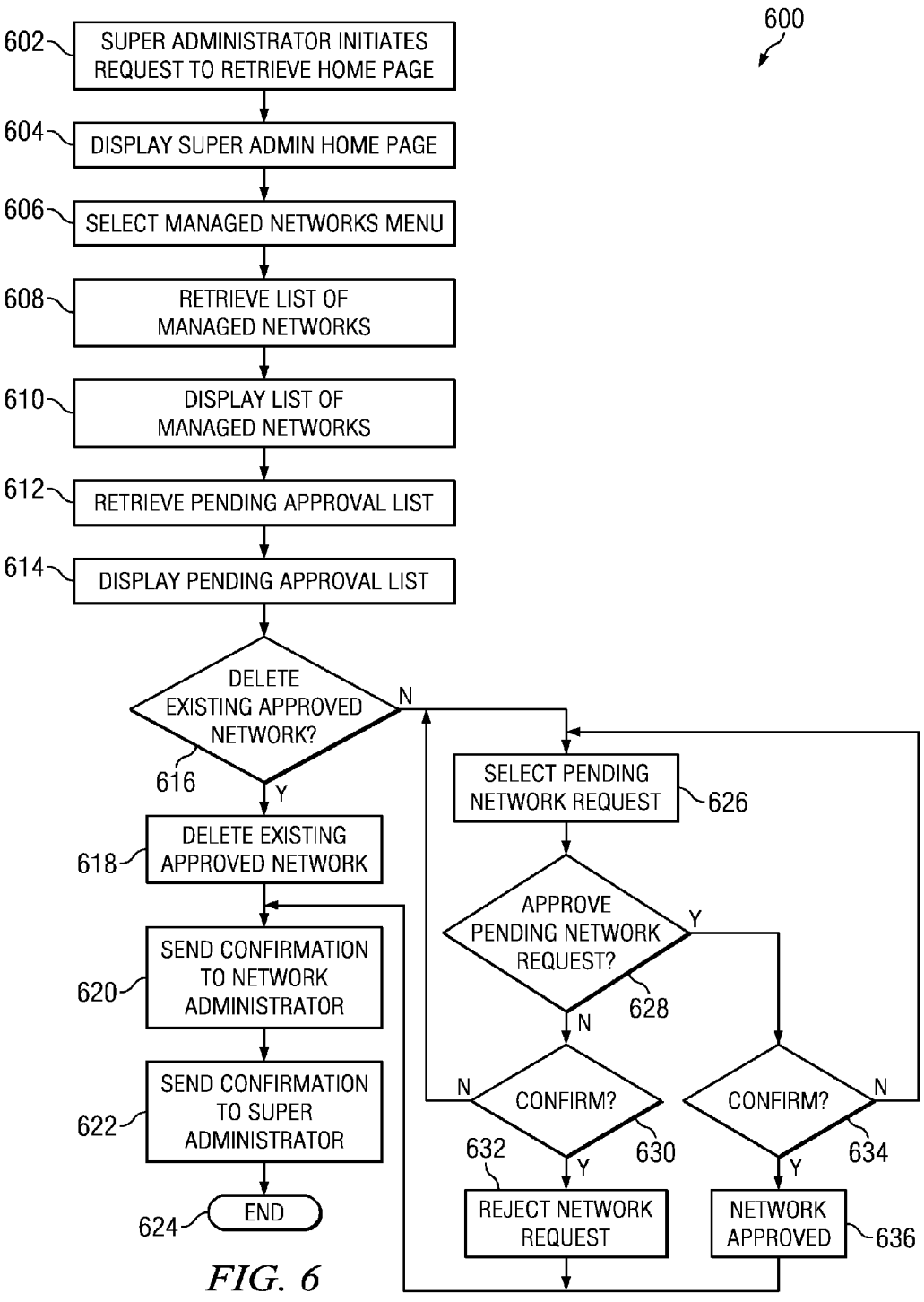

600
602
SUPER ADMINISTRATOR INITIATES REQUEST TO RETRIEVE HOME PAGE
604
DISPLAY SUPER ADMIN HOME PAGE
606
SELECT MANAGED NETWORKS MENU
608
RETRIEVE LIST OF MANAGED NETWORKS
610
DISPLAY LIST OF MANAGED NETWORKS
612
RETRIEVE PENDING APPROVAL LIST
614
DISPLAY PENDING APPROVAL LIST
DELETE EXISTING APPROVED NETWORK?
616
N
Y
618
DELETE EXISTING APPROVED NETWORK
620
SEND CONFIRMATION TO NETWORK ADMINISTRATOR
622
SEND CONFIRMATION TO SUPER ADMINISTRATOR
624
END
SELECT PENDING NETWORK REQUEST
626
APPROVE PENDING NETWORK REQUEST?
628
Y
N
CONFIRM?
630
N
Y
632
REJECT NETWORK REQUEST
CONFIRM?
634
N
Y
NETWORK APPROVED
636

FIG. 6

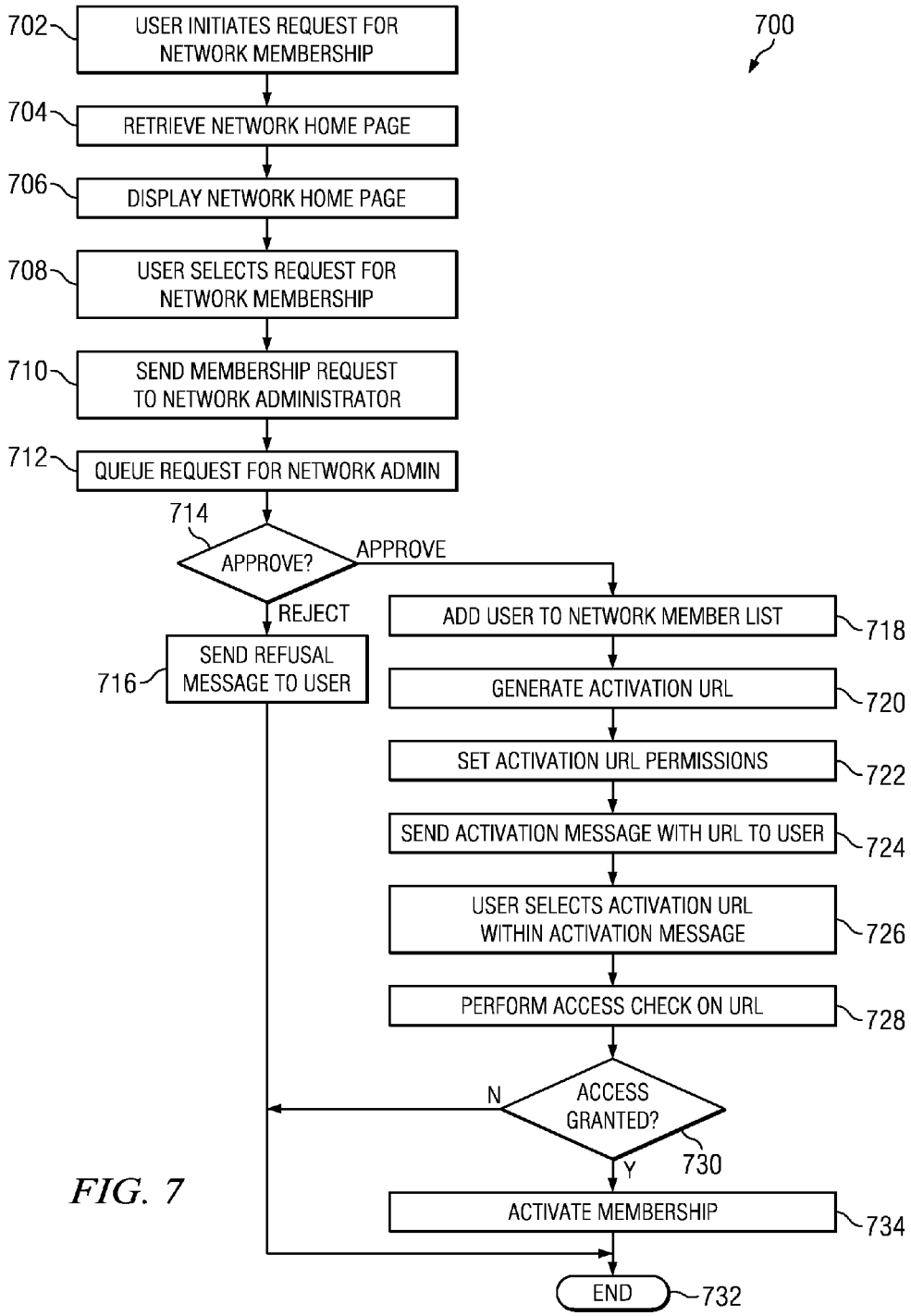

700
702
USER INITIATES REQUEST FOR NETWORK MEMBERSHIP
704
RETRIEVE NETWORK HOME PAGE
706
DISPLAY NETWORK HOME PAGE
708
USER SELECTS REQUEST FOR NETWORK MEMBERSHIP
710
SEND MEMBERSHIP REQUEST TO NETWORK ADMINISTRATOR
712
QUEUE REQUEST FOR NETWORK ADMIN
714
APPROVE?
APPROVE
REJECT
716
SEND REFUSAL MESSAGE TO USER
ADD USER TO NETWORK MEMBER LIST
718
GENERATE ACTIVATION URL
720
SET ACTIVATION URL PERMISSIONS
722
SEND ACTIVATION MESSAGE WITH URL TO USER
724
USER SELECTS ACTIVATION URL WITHIN ACTIVATION MESSAGE
726
PERFORM ACCESS CHECK ON URL
728
N
ACCESS GRANTED?
730
Y
ACTIVATE MEMBERSHIP
734
END
732

FIG. 7

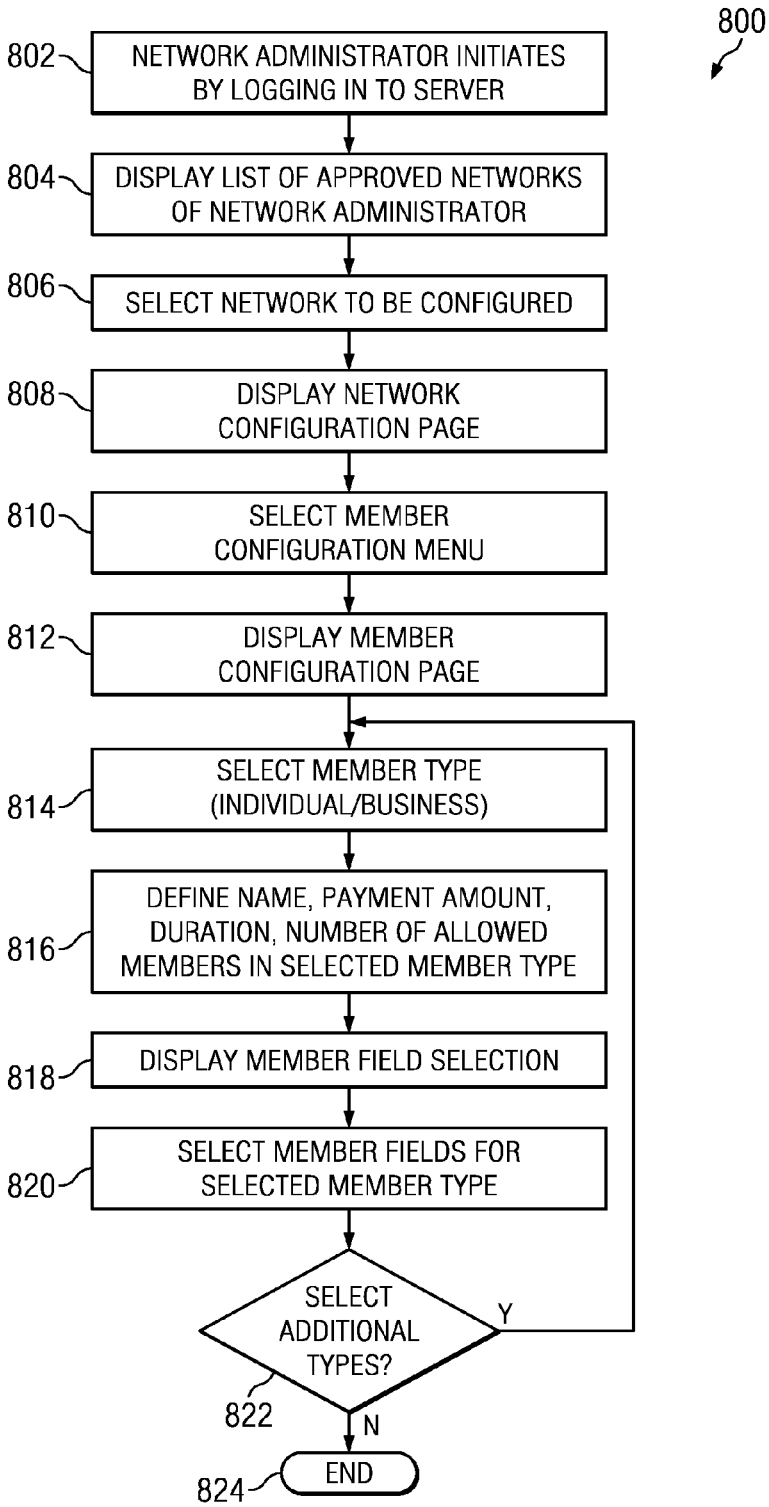

800
802
NETWORK ADMINISTRATOR INITIATES BY LOGGING IN TO SERVER
804
DISPLAY LIST OF APPROVED NETWORKS OF NETWORK ADMINISTRATOR
806
SELECT NETWORK TO BE CONFIGURED
808
DISPLAY NETWORK CONFIGURATION PAGE
810
SELECT MEMBER CONFIGURATION MENU
812
DISPLAY MEMBER CONFIGURATION PAGE
814
SELECT MEMBER TYPE (INDIVIDUAL/BUSINESS)
816
DEFINE NAME, PAYMENT AMOUNT, DURATION, NUMBER OF ALLOWED MEMBERS IN SELECTED MEMBER TYPE
818
DISPLAY MEMBER FIELD SELECTION
820
SELECT MEMBER FIELDS FOR SELECTED MEMBER TYPE
SELECT ADDITIONAL TYPES?
822
Y
N
824
END

FIG. 8

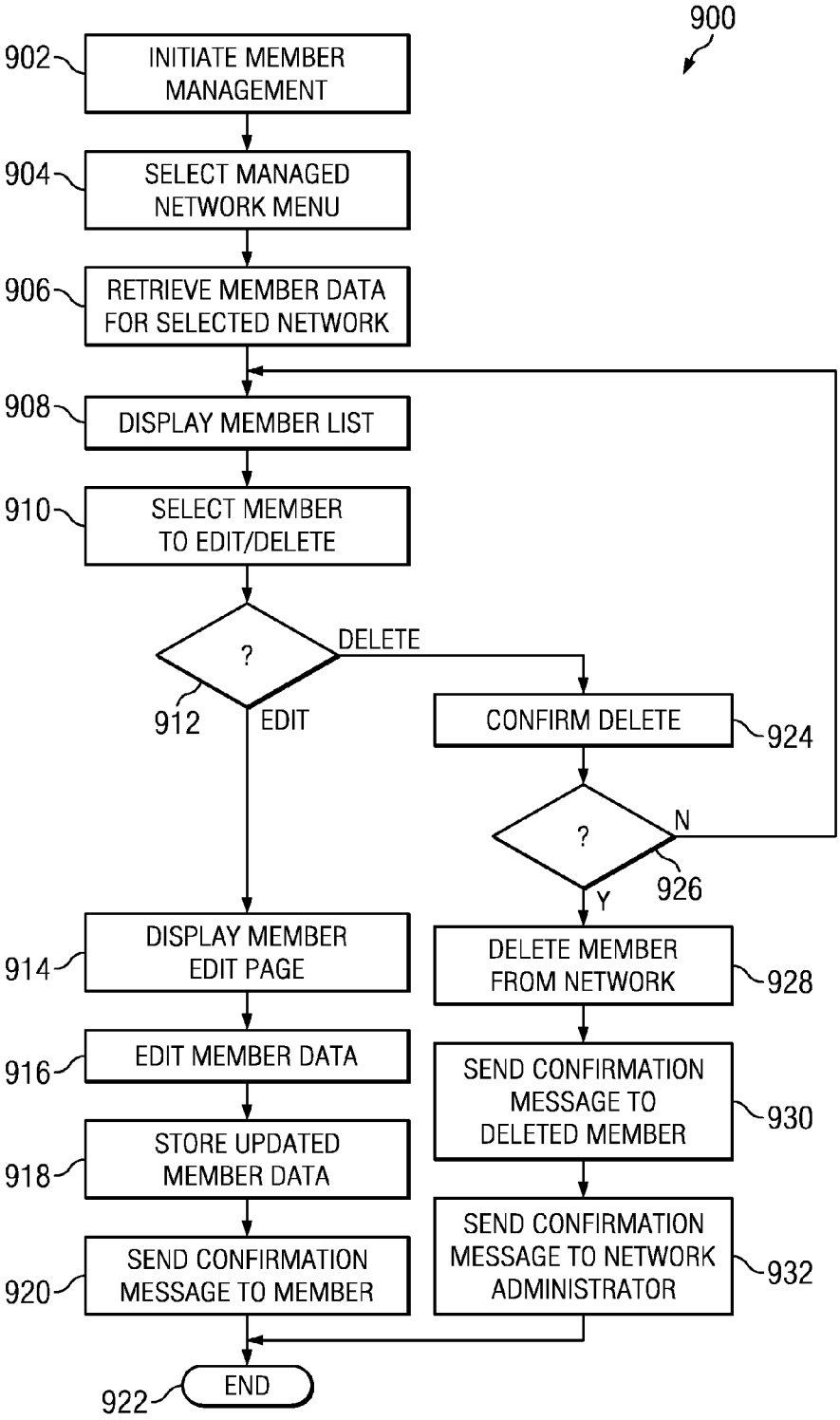

900
902
INITIATE MEMBER MANAGEMENT
904
SELECT MANAGED NETWORK MENU
906
RETRIEVE MEMBER DATA FOR SELECTED NETWORK
908
DISPLAY MEMBER LIST
910
SELECT MEMBER TO EDIT/DELETE
?
912
DELETE
EDIT
CONFIRM DELETE
924
?
N
926
Y
914
DISPLAY MEMBER EDIT PAGE
916
EDIT MEMBER DATA
918
STORE UPDATED MEMBER DATA
920
SEND CONFIRMATION MESSAGE TO MEMBER
DELETE MEMBER FROM NETWORK
928
SEND CONFIRMATION MESSAGE TO DELETED MEMBER
930
SEND CONFIRMATION MESSAGE TO NETWORK ADMINISTRATOR
932
922
END

FIG. 9

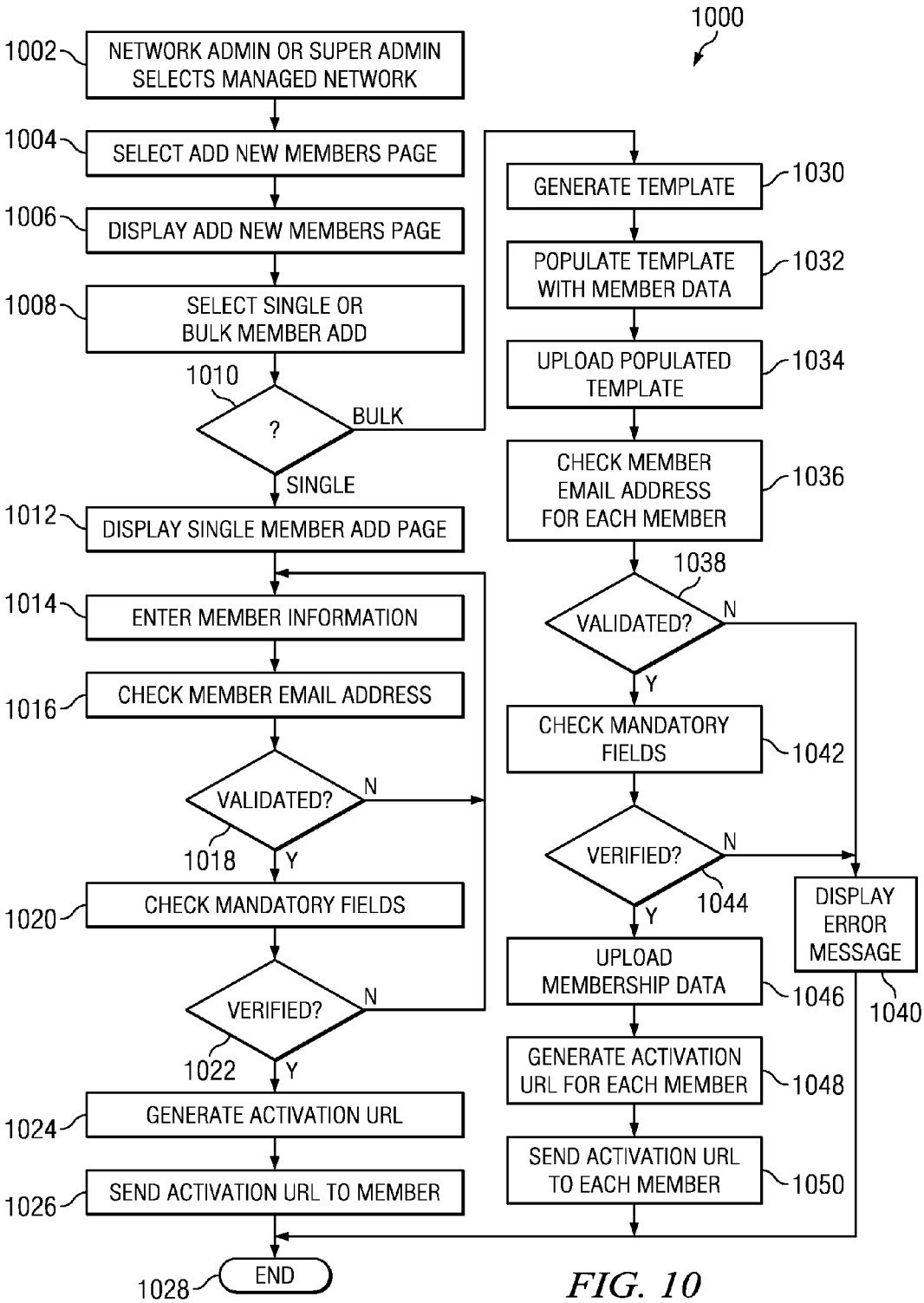

1000
1002
NETWORK ADMIN OR SUPER ADMIN SELECTS MANAGED NETWORK
1004
SELECT ADD NEW MEMBERS PAGE
1006
DISPLAY ADD NEW MEMBERS PAGE
1008
SELECT SINGLE OR BULK MEMBER ADD
1010
?
BULK
SINGLE
1012
DISPLAY SINGLE MEMBER ADD PAGE
1014
ENTER MEMBER INFORMATION
1016
CHECK MEMBER EMAIL ADDRESS
VALIDATED?
N
1018
Y
1020
CHECK MANDATORY FIELDS
VERIFIED?
N
1022
Y
1024
GENERATE ACTIVATION URL
1026
SEND ACTIVATION URL TO MEMBER
1028
END
1030
GENERATE TEMPLATE
1032
POPULATE TEMPLATE WITH MEMBER DATA
1034
UPLOAD POPULATED TEMPLATE
1036
CHECK MEMBER EMAIL ADDRESS FOR EACH MEMBER
1038
VALIDATED?
N
Y
1042
CHECK MANDATORY FIELDS
VERIFIED?
N
1044
Y
DISPLAY ERROR MESSAGE
1040
1046
UPLOAD MEMBERSHIP DATA
1048
GENERATE ACTIVATION URL FOR EACH MEMBER
1050
SEND ACTIVATION URL TO EACH MEMBER

FIG. 10

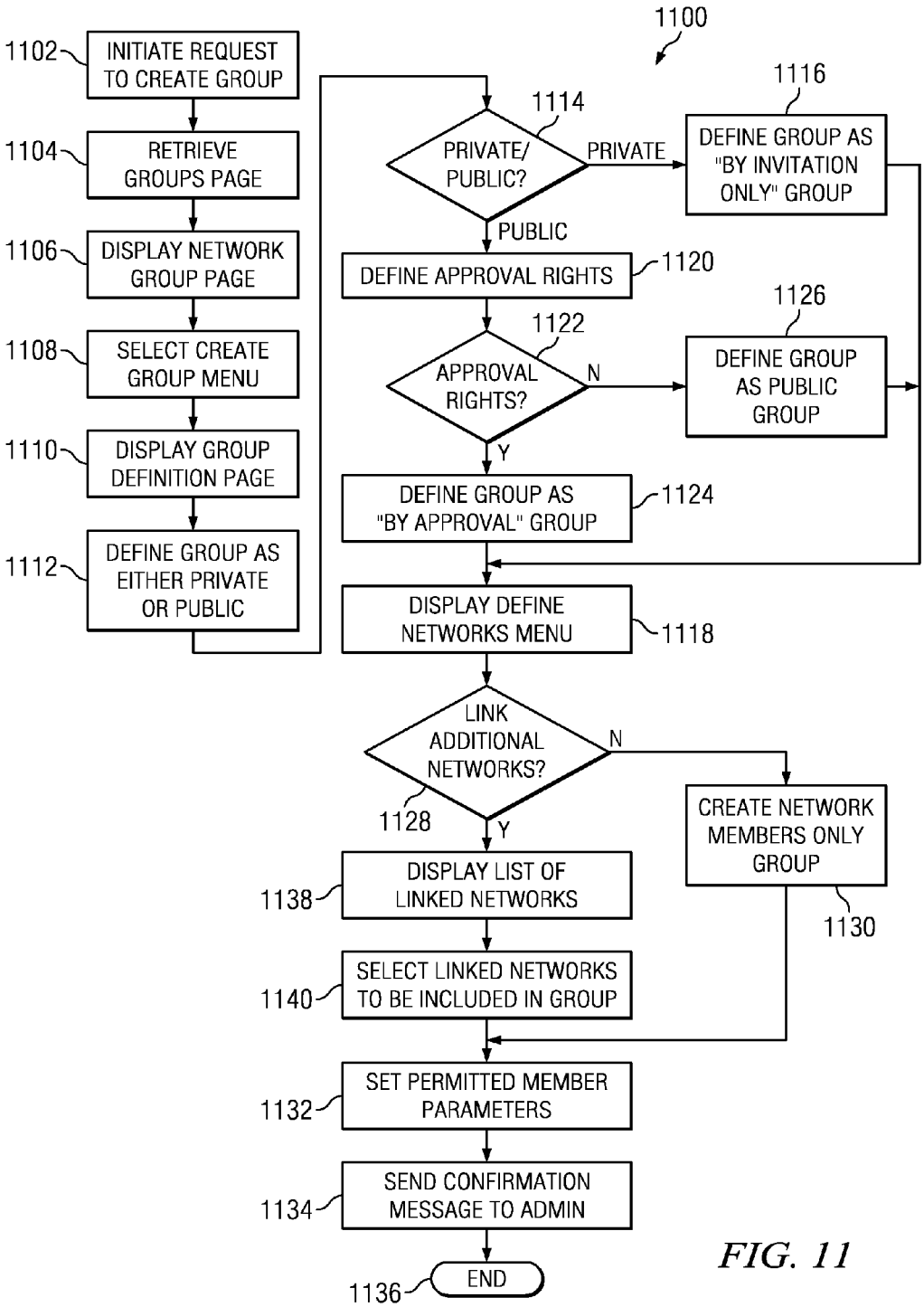

1100
1102
INITIATE REQUEST TO CREATE GROUP
1104
RETRIEVE GROUPS PAGE
1106
DISPLAY NETWORK GROUP PAGE
1108
SELECT CREATE GROUP MENU
1110
DISPLAY GROUP DEFINITION PAGE
1112
DEFINE GROUP AS EITHER PRIVATE OR PUBLIC
1114
PRIVATE/ PUBLIC?
PRIVATE
1116
DEFINE GROUP AS "BY INVITATION ONLY" GROUP
PUBLIC
DEFINE APPROVAL RIGHTS
1120
1122
APPROVAL RIGHTS?
N
1126
DEFINE GROUP AS PUBLIC GROUP
Y
DEFINE GROUP AS "BY APPROVAL" GROUP
1124
DISPLAY DEFINE NETWORKS MENU
1118
LINK ADDITIONAL NETWORKS?
N
1128
Y
CREATE NETWORK MEMBERS ONLY GROUP
1130
1138
DISPLAY LIST OF LINKED NETWORKS
1140
SELECT LINKED NETWORKS TO BE INCLUDED IN GROUP
1132
SET PERMITTED MEMBER PARAMETERS
1134
SEND CONFIRMATION MESSAGE TO ADMIN
1136
END

FIG. 11

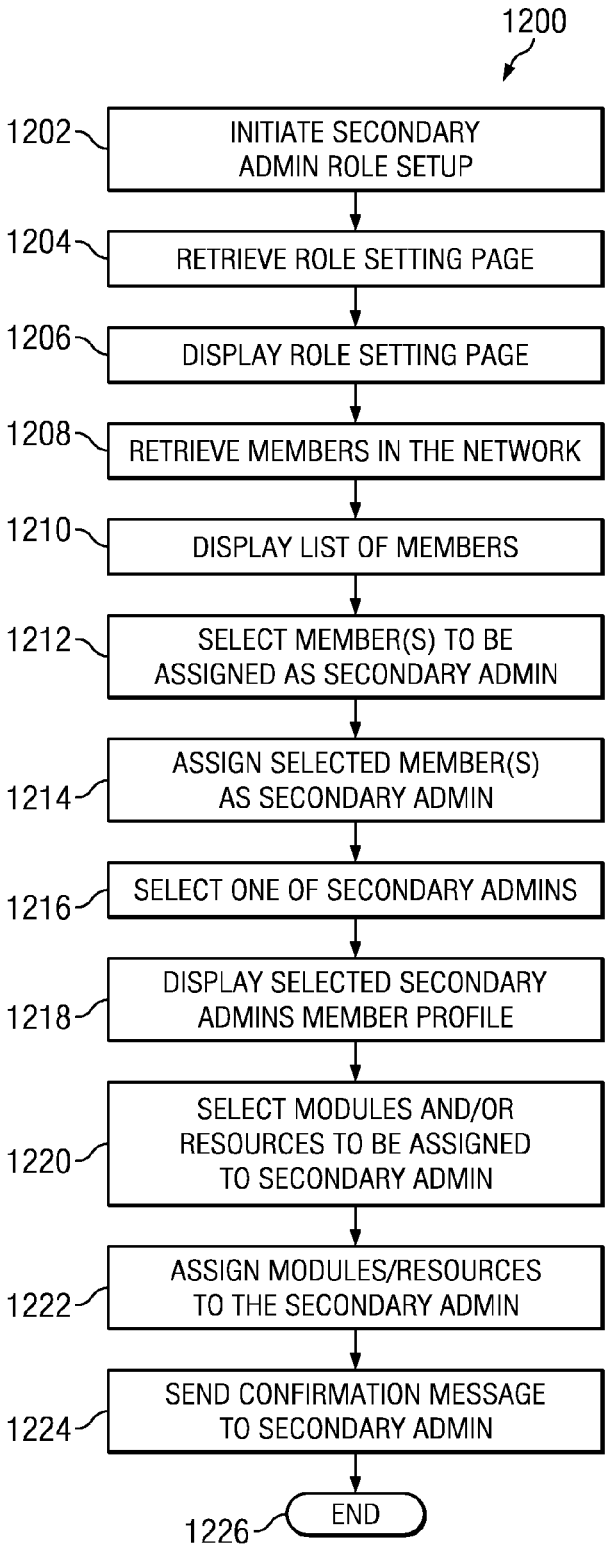

1200
1202
INITIATE SECONDARY ADMIN ROLE SETUP
1204
RETRIEVE ROLE SETTING PAGE
1206
DISPLAY ROLE SETTING PAGE
1208
RETRIEVE MEMBERS IN THE NETWORK
1210
DISPLAY LIST OF MEMBERS
1212
SELECT MEMBER(S) TO BE ASSIGNED AS SECONDARY ADMIN
1214
ASSIGN SELECTED MEMBER(S) AS SECONDARY ADMIN
1216
SELECT ONE OF SECONDARY ADMINS
1218
DISPLAY SELECTED SECONDARY ADMINS MEMBER PROFILE
1220
SELECT MODULES AND/OR RESOURCES TO BE ASSIGNED TO SECONDARY ADMIN
1222
ASSIGN MODULES/RESOURCES TO THE SECONDARY ADMIN
1224
SEND CONFIRMATION MESSAGE TO SECONDARY ADMIN
1226
END

FIG. 12

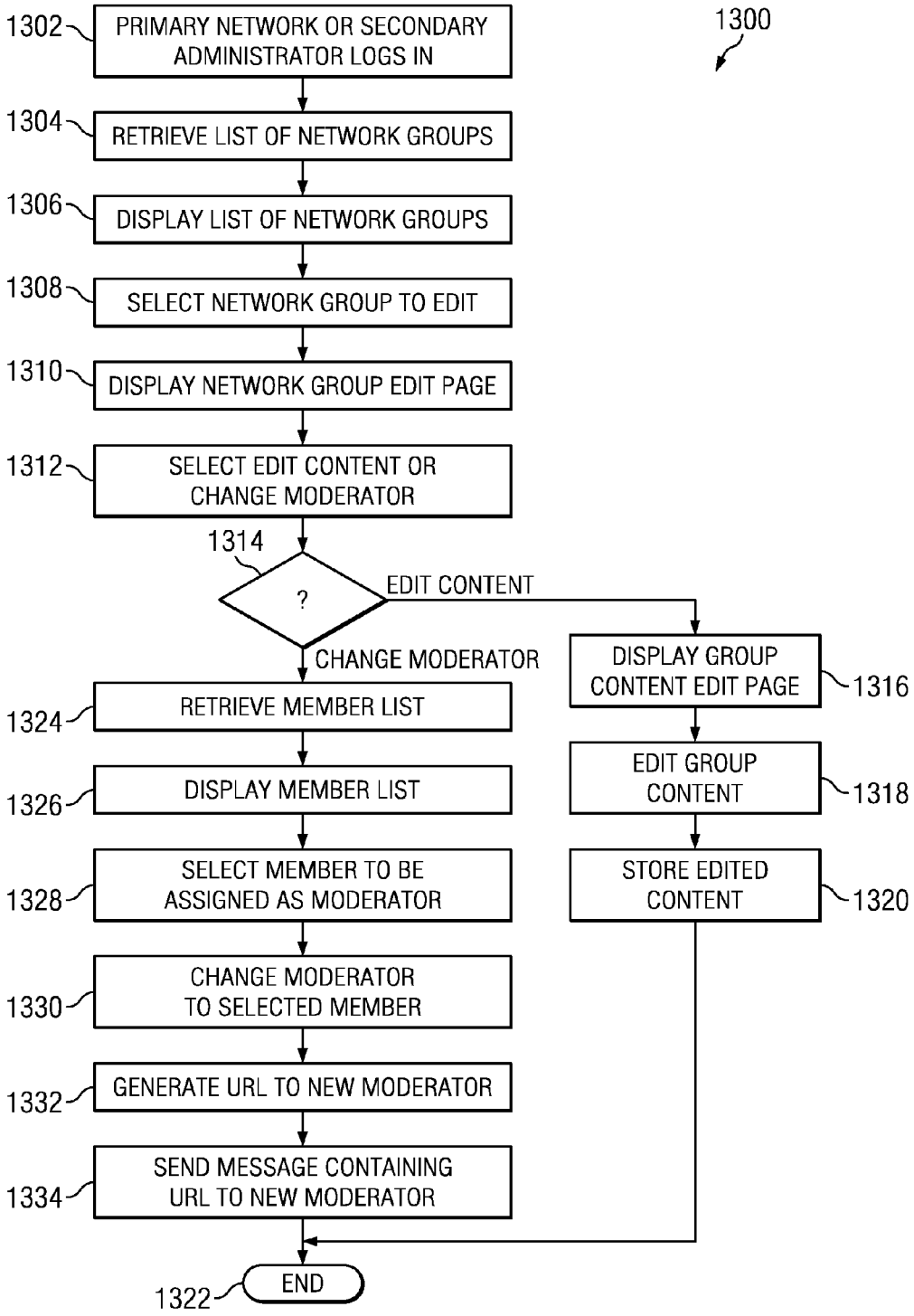

1300
1302
PRIMARY NETWORK OR SECONDARY ADMINISTRATOR LOGS IN
1304
RETRIEVE LIST OF NETWORK GROUPS
1306
DISPLAY LIST OF NETWORK GROUPS
1308
SELECT NETWORK GROUP TO EDIT
1310
DISPLAY NETWORK GROUP EDIT PAGE
1312
SELECT EDIT CONTENT OR CHANGE MODERATOR
1314
?
EDIT CONTENT
CHANGE MODERATOR
DISPLAY GROUP CONTENT EDIT PAGE
1316
EDIT GROUP CONTENT
1318
STORE EDITED CONTENT
1320
1324
RETRIEVE MEMBER LIST
1326
DISPLAY MEMBER LIST
1328
SELECT MEMBER TO BE ASSIGNED AS MODERATOR
1330
CHANGE MODERATOR TO SELECTED MEMBER
1332
GENERATE URL TO NEW MODERATOR
1334
SEND MESSAGE CONTAINING URL TO NEW MODERATOR
1322
END

FIG. 13

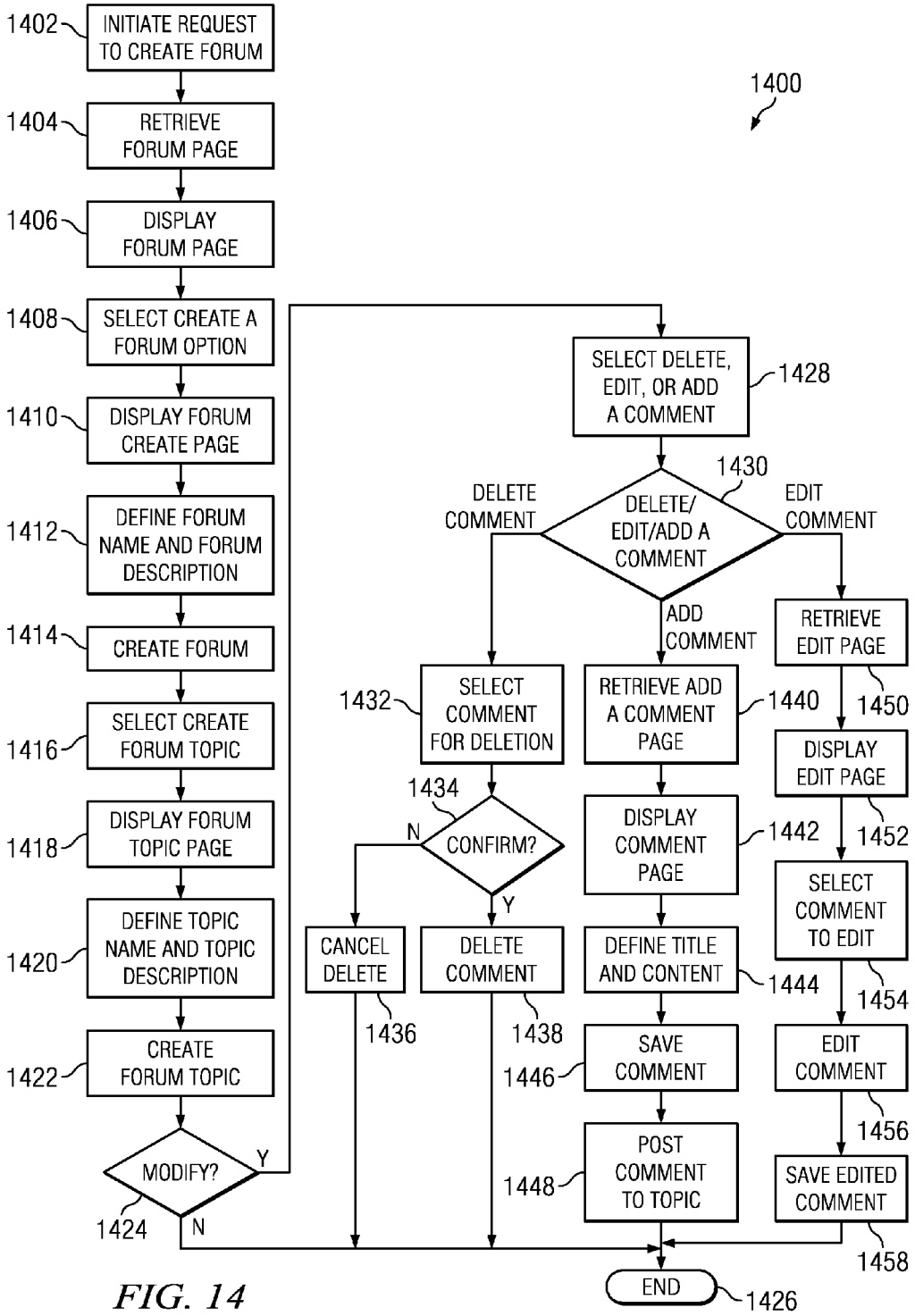

1400
1402
INITIATE REQUEST TO CREATE FORUM
1404
RETRIEVE FORUM PAGE
1406
DISPLAY FORUM PAGE
1408
SELECT CREATE A FORUM OPTION
1410
DISPLAY FORUM CREATE PAGE
1412
DEFINE FORUM NAME AND FORUM DESCRIPTION
1414
CREATE FORUM
1416
SELECT CREATE FORUM TOPIC
1418
DISPLAY FORUM TOPIC PAGE
1420
DEFINE TOPIC NAME AND TOPIC DESCRIPTION
1422
CREATE FORUM TOPIC
MODIFY?
Y
N
1424
SELECT DELETE, EDIT, OR ADD A COMMENT
1428
1430
DELETE/ EDIT/ADD A COMMENT
DELETE COMMENT
EDIT COMMENT
ADD COMMENT
1432
SELECT COMMENT FOR DELETION
1434
CONFIRM?
N
Y
CANCEL DELETE
1436
DELETE COMMENT
1438
1440
RETRIEVE ADD A COMMENT PAGE
DISPLAY COMMENT PAGE
1442
DEFINE TITLE AND CONTENT
1444
SAVE COMMENT
1446
POST COMMENT TO TOPIC
1448
RETRIEVE EDIT PAGE
1450
DISPLAY EDIT PAGE
1452
SELECT COMMENT TO EDIT
1454
EDIT COMMENT
1456
SAVE EDITED COMMENT
1458
END
1426

FIG. 14

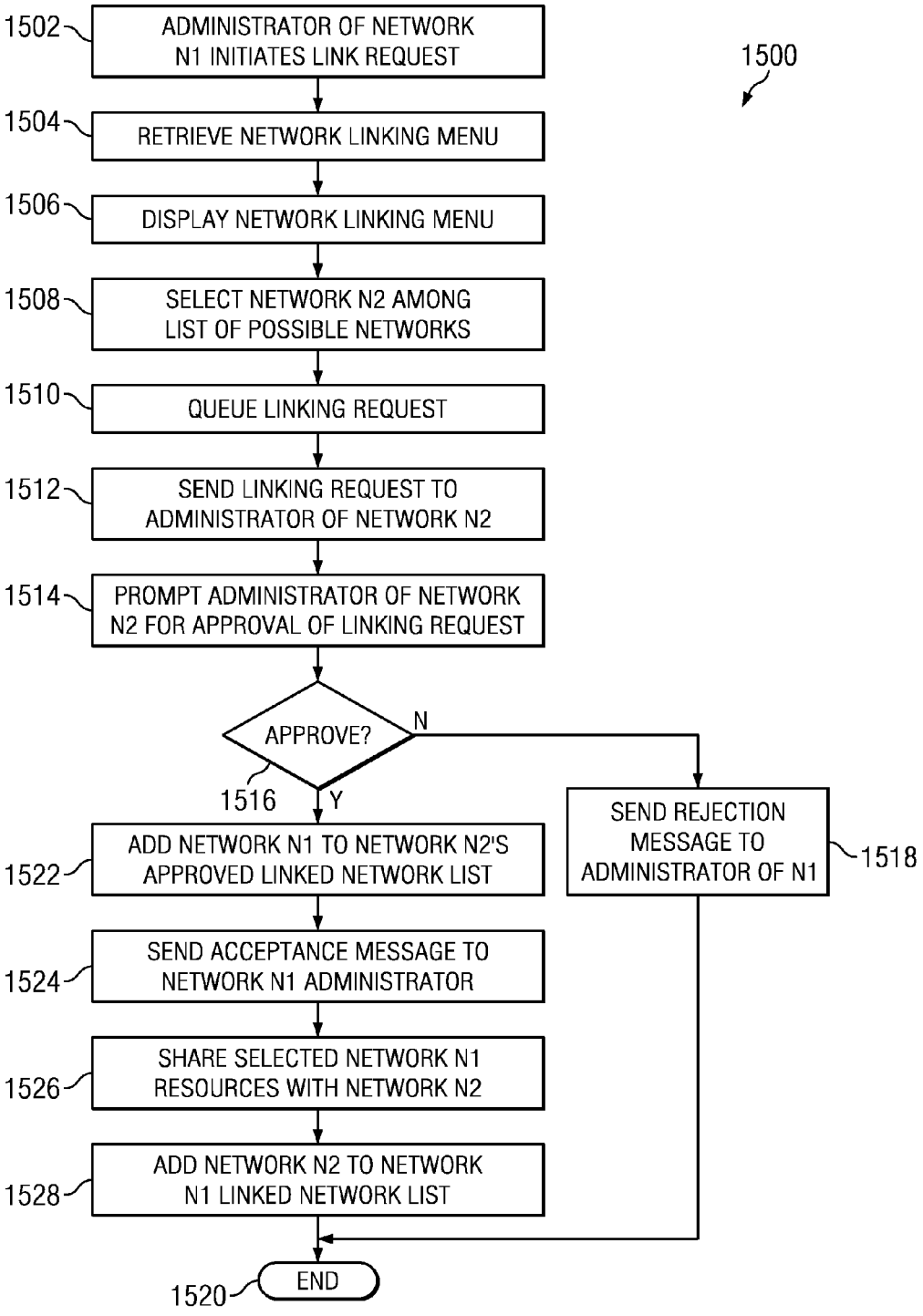

1500
1502
ADMINISTRATOR OF NETWORK N1 INITIATES LINK REQUEST
1504
RETRIEVE NETWORK LINKING MENU
1506
DISPLAY NETWORK LINKING MENU
1508
SELECT NETWORK N2 AMONG LIST OF POSSIBLE NETWORKS
1510
QUEUE LINKING REQUEST
1512
SEND LINKING REQUEST TO ADMINISTRATOR OF NETWORK N2
1514
PROMPT ADMINISTRATOR OF NETWORK N2 FOR APPROVAL OF LINKING REQUEST
APPROVE?
N
Y
1516
SEND REJECTION MESSAGE TO ADMINISTRATOR OF N1
1518
1522
ADD NETWORK N1 TO NETWORK N2'S APPROVED LINKED NETWORK LIST
1524
SEND ACCEPTANCE MESSAGE TO NETWORK N1 ADMINISTRATOR
1526
SHARE SELECTED NETWORK N1 RESOURCES WITH NETWORK N2
1528
ADD NETWORK N2 TO NETWORK N1 LINKED NETWORK LIST
1520
END

FIG. 15

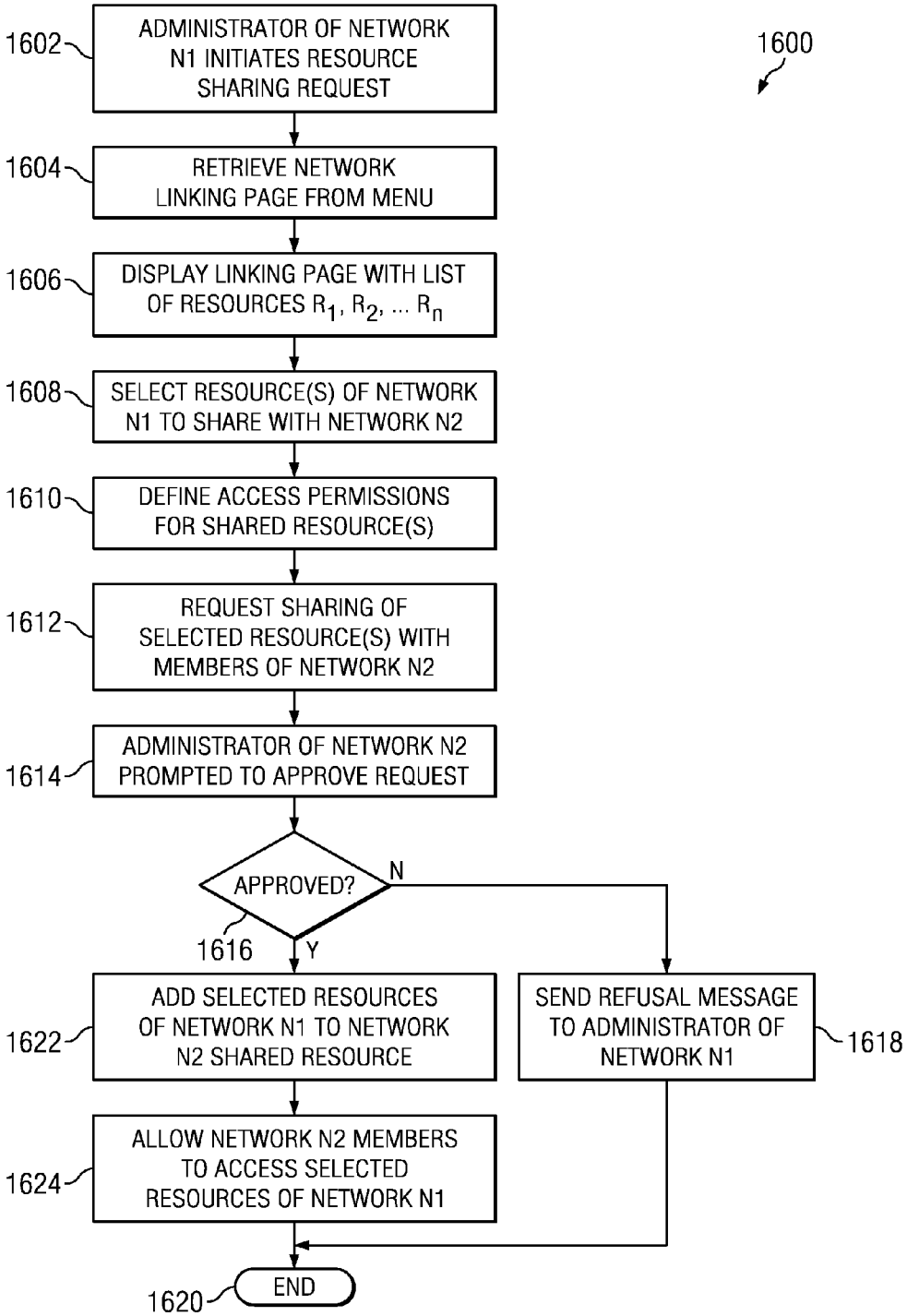

1600
1602
ADMINISTRATOR OF NETWORK N1 INITIATES RESOURCE SHARING REQUEST
1604
RETRIEVE NETWORK LINKING PAGE FROM MENU
1606
DISPLAY LINKING PAGE WITH LIST OF RESOURCES R_1, R_2, ... R_n
1608
SELECT RESOURCE(S) OF NETWORK N1 TO SHARE WITH NETWORK N2
1610
DEFINE ACCESS PERMISSIONS FOR SHARED RESOURCE(S)
1612
REQUEST SHARING OF SELECTED RESOURCE(S) WITH MEMBERS OF NETWORK N2
1614
ADMINISTRATOR OF NETWORK N2 PROMPTED TO APPROVE REQUEST
APPROVED?
1616
N
Y
1622
ADD SELECTED RESOURCES OF NETWORK N1 TO NETWORK N2 SHARED RESOURCE
SEND REFUSAL MESSAGE TO ADMINISTRATOR OF NETWORK N1
1618
1624
ALLOW NETWORK N2 MEMBERS TO ACCESS SELECTED RESOURCES OF NETWORK N1
1620
END

FIG. 16

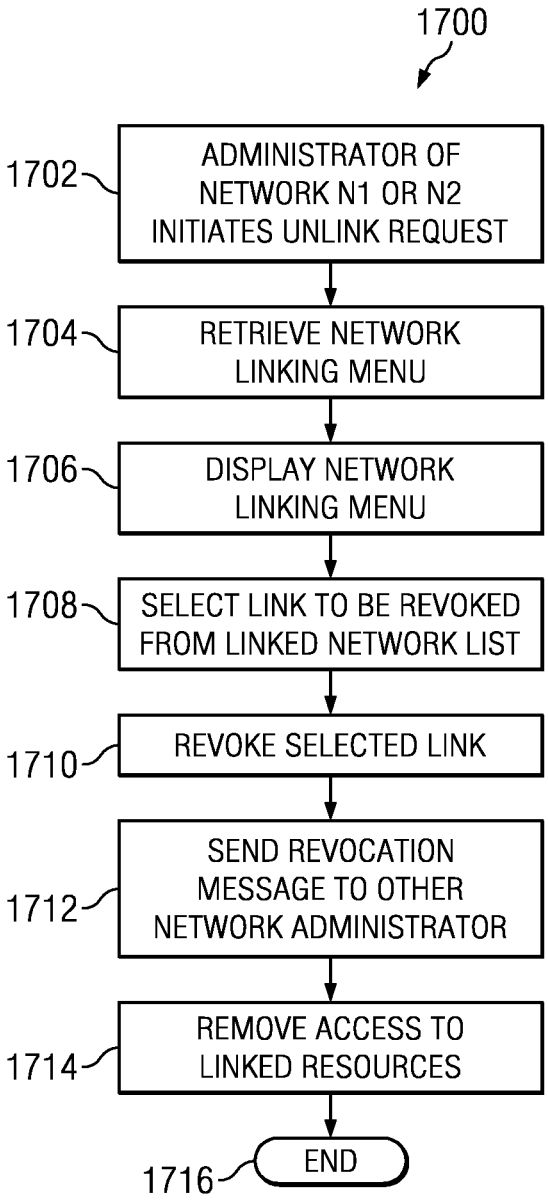

1700
1702
ADMINISTRATOR OF NETWORK N1 OR N2 INITIATES UNLINK REQUEST
1704
RETRIEVE NETWORK LINKING MENU
1706
DISPLAY NETWORK LINKING MENU
1708
SELECT LINK TO BE REVOKED FROM LINKED NETWORK LIST
1710
REVOKE SELECTED LINK
1712
SEND REVOCATION MESSAGE TO OTHER NETWORK ADMINISTRATOR
1714
REMOVE ACCESS TO LINKED RESOURCES
1716
END

FIG. 17

SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR LINKING NETWORKS TO ONE ANOTHER AND SHARING RESOURCES BETWEEN MEMBERS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims benefit of U.S. Provisional Application Ser. No. 61/242,793, filed on Sep. 15, 2009, and entitled SOFTWARE APPLICATION FOR DIRECTLY CONNECTING ORGANIZATIONAL DATABASES TO ONE ANOTHER VIA THE INTERNET.

TECHNICAL FIELD

Embodiments of the invention are directed to linking, through the use of computers and communications devices and the like, networks of users, and related methods, systems, and software applications.

BACKGROUND

Existing social networking applications currently available over the internet are primarily concerned with connecting individual members of a network to one another. This is achieved by one individual sending an electronic request to connect to another individual and the other individual accepting the electronic request. Examples of websites that offer this type of service include LinkedIn, Facebook, Plaxo and Twitter. Such software applications are geared toward connecting individuals and do not provide functionality designed for organizational entities to connect to one another.

SUMMARY

An embodiment of a method of linking a first network to a second network includes sending, by a first network having at least one first member associated therewith, a link request message to a second network having at least one second member associated therewith. The link request message includes a request to establish a link with the second network. The first network further includes at least one resource associated therewith and accessible by the at least one first member. The method further includes receiving an acceptance message from the second network at the first network, establishing a first link between the first network and the second network in response to receiving the acceptance message, and sharing access to the at least one resource to the at least one second member of the second network.

A system for linking a first network to a second network includes a first network, a second network, and a server. The first network has at least one first member associated therewith. The first network further includes at least one resource associated therewith and accessible by the at least one first member. The second network has at least one second member associated therewith. The server is in communication with the first network and the second network. The server is configured to receive a link request message from the first network, the link request message including a request to establish a link between the first network and the second network. The server is further configured to send the link request message to the second network, receive an acceptance message from the second network, send the acceptance message to the first network, establish a first link between the first network and the second network in response to receiving the acceptance message, and share access to the at least one resource to the at least one second member of the second network.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a more complete understanding, reference is now made to the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying Drawings in which:

FIG. **1** illustrates an embodiment of a system for linking networks to facilitate the sharing of resources between members;

FIG. **2** illustrates an embodiment of an example linking structure and resource sharing among members of five networks;

FIG. **3** illustrates another embodiment of an example linking structure and resource sharing between three networks;

FIG. **4** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure for sign up of a user on a central network;

FIG. **5** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure for creating a network within the central network;

FIG. **6** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure for approving creation of a network within the central network by a super administrator of the central network;

FIG. **7** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure for requesting network membership by a user;

FIG. **8** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure for configuring a network by a network administrator;

FIG. **9** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure for allowing a network administrator to manage members of a network;

FIG. **10** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure for a network administrator or super administrator to add new members to a network;

FIG. **11** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure for creation of a group associated with one or more networks;

FIG. **12** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure for designating a secondary administrator of a network by an administrator of a network;

FIG. **13** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure for managing of a network group;

FIG. **14** illustrates the embodiment of a procedure for creating a forum for member discussion within a network or group;

FIG. **15** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure for linking a first network to a second network;

FIG. **16** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure for resource sharing between linked networks; and

FIG. **17** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure for revocation of a linked network.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Referring now to the drawings, wherein like reference numbers are used herein to designate like elements throughout, the various views and embodiments of a system and method for linking networks to one another and sharing resources between members are illustrated and described, and other possible embodiments are described. The figures are not necessarily drawn to scale, and in some instances the drawings have been exaggerated and/or simplified in places for illustrative purposes only. One of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate the many possible applications and variations based on the following examples of possible embodiments.

Various embodiments of the invention provide a system and method for linking together of two or more networks, and facilitating the sharing of resources associated with individual networks to network members of other networks. A

network may refer to any organizational entity either formal or informal including corporations, businesses, employee resource groups, non-profit organizations, associations, alumni groups, social groups, chambers of commerce, trade associations, sport associations, sister organizations, faith based organizations, independent units of the same organization, chapters, affinity networks, professional organizations, and other associations. Each network may include network members which may include individuals, corporations, for profit or non profit organizations, businesses, associations, employees or other individuals with a common interest. Various embodiments provide a platform that allows networks to connect with one another by one network sending a request to connect to the other network and the other network accepting. When the two networks are connected, and when the networks allow for it in connection preferences, members of each of the individual networks will be connected to one another without requiring each member of the networks to send individual connection requests to other members. For example, if each network between two networks has a hundred members, the equivalent of ten thousand individual connections may be established with just one link. Each individual network may choose whether to make itself available for linking with other networks, and the network can choose whether to accept a request to link to another network.

Each network may include a number of resources associated therewith. These resources may include, for example, membership lists, event calendars, blogs, forums and forum topics, announcements, newsletters, chat sessions, groups, group events, bulletins, discussions and discussion topics, documents, video, pictures, broadcast media, slides, databases, and document storage space. Each network may choose to share one or more of these resources with members of another network to which it is linked. Each network may further have an organizational database associated therewith.

Various embodiments of the invention provide a platform and process to link one network to another for the performance of various functions, such as, sharing of information, privileges, and processes, based on selected criteria, for example, a common interest, purpose, need, race, color, religion, age, gender, disability, military status, sex, pregnancy, language, nation of origin. Various embodiments provide for methods, systems, and software that enable users to customize their links according to selectable criteria. In various embodiments, a network can choose whether to make itself available for linking with other networks. If available, the network can choose whether to accept a request to link to another network. Various embodiments described herein may be implemented by any suitable hardware or software such as, for example, using Java, PHP, .Net, or any other suitable technology that may evolve over time.

In some embodiments, network groups may be created in one or more networks. A group may include one or more selected members of a particular network, or selected members of more than one network grouped together for a common purpose, goal or interest. The groups may be formed across linked networks based on one or more selectable criteria such as, for example, a common interest, purpose, need, race, religion, age, gender, disability, military status, sex, pregnancy, language, nation of origin, or rules-based tags. A rules-based tag may be an identifier that gives a semantic meaning to information or characteristics associated with a member. Accordingly, an access rule may be established that takes into account one or more tags and limits resources to those members having the tagged characteristic. For example, a CEO may tag a particular resource and share it only with other CEOs. Members of a group may belong to one or more networks on a common network and share selected resources with one another. In some embodiments, a group may exist within a network that includes only members from the network. In some embodiment, a user may be a member of only one network. In still other embodiments, a user may be a member of two or more networks. In various embodiments, one or more resources may be owned by a member, and this member may share the one or more resources with other members, groups, or other networks within a central network. In some embodiments, a group itself may be specified as a resource that may be shared with members of a network, with other groups, or with members of other networks.

In various embodiments, networks have fine-grained control over the ability of other networks to find, connect with and get access to their resources. The control available to a network may include whether the network is visible to others in the network, whether other networks can send the network a request to connect, and whether the resources of the network can be accessed by other networks to which the network chooses to connect. In some embodiments, the members of a network can choose whether individual items of their personal profile information will be visible to members of networks that connect to network that they belong to. In some embodiments, When two networks link to one another the connection can have its own set of resources such as blogs, forums, events, newsletters, etc. These resources may not belong exclusively to either network but to the linked entity and therefore available to members of both networks.

FIG. **1** illustrates an embodiment of a system **100** for linking networks to facilitate the sharing of resources between members. The system **100** includes a central network **102** having a server **104** and database **106**. In various embodiments, the server **104** may include hardware, software and/or computer instructions to execute various processes and provide various capabilities of the network linking platform described herein. In a particular embodiment, the server **104** is in communication with a database **106** which may store information related to the various aspects of the linking and sharing of resources between linked networks as well as user profiles of the members of the various linked networks. Although the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **1** shows a single server **104** and database **106**, it should be understood that in various embodiments, a number of servers and databases may be utilized to form a central network **102**. In still other embodiments, instead of using a central network **102** to perform the various functions described herein, a distributed network may be used instead. The server **104** is in communication with a first network N**1**, a second network N**2**, and a third network N**3** via one or more communication links. The communication links may include any suitable networking connection technology such as the internet. The first network N**1** includes resources R**1**, R**2** and R**3** associated therewith. The first network N**1** further includes first network members that are members of the network N**1**. The second network N**2** includes second network members, and has resources R**4** and R**5** associated therewith. The third network N**3** has third network members and has resources R**6**, R**7** and R**8** associated therewith. The resources R**1**-R**8** may include any type of information resource available to members of their respective networks. Examples of information resources include network membership directories, event calendars, blogs, discussion forums, announcements, newsletters, email messages, bulletins, documents, video, audio, images, broadcast media, slides, and document storage areas.

In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **1**, a first link **108** is established between the first network N**1** and the second network N**2**. This link allows selected resources such as

resources R1, R2 and R3 associated with the first network N1 to be shared with members of the second network N2. In a particular embodiments, the first link **108** is established by an administrator of the first network N1 sending a link request message to an administrator of the second network N2, and the administrator of the second network N2 accepting this request. In addition, a second link **110** may be established between the second network N2 and the first network N1. The second link **110** allows sharing of resources associated with network N2 such as R4 and R5 to members of the first network N1. A third link **112** is established between the second network N2 and the third network N3 allowing sharing of resources associated with the second network N2 with members of network N3. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **1**, there is no link established in the return direction between the third network N3 and the second network N2, and therefore resources associated with the third network N3 such as resource R6, R7 and R8 are not shared with members of second network N2. In addition, since there are no links between the first network N1 and the third network N3, no resources are shared therebetween.

The system **100** may further include a communication device **114** associated with a user that is a member of the first network N1. In various embodiments, the communication device **114** may include a computer, a mobile device, a terminal, or any other communication device. A user may use the communication device **114** to access resources associated with the first network N1 and the second network N2 to which he has been authorized. Although for illustration purposes, the communication device **114** is shown in communication with the first network N1, it should be understood that the user may use the communication device **114** to access network resources by logging into the server **104** via any network connection such as the internet. In addition, although for illustration purposes, the first network N1, second network N2 and third network N3 are shown as being external to the central network **102**, it should be understood that in various embodiments, the first network N1, the second network N2 and the third network N3 may be logical networks that are stored and maintained in the central network **102**.

FIG. **2** illustrates an embodiment of an example linking structure **200** and resource sharing among members of five networks. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **2**, a network A and a network B are linked together via a link **202** to share each others member directories. This allows their members to network online such as by emailing or communicating in any other way using applications provided by the central network **102**. Additional features may be provided such as, for example, allowing members of linked networks to access particular forums or message boards, instant messaging functions and the like. Network B and network C are linked together by link **204** so that their respective members may view the blogs and announcements of each others respective networks and not share any other resources between the networks. Network A and network E are linked together by link **206**, network A and network D are linked together by link **208**, and network D and network E are linked together by link **210**. Network A, network D and network E are all linked together thereby allowing the formation of a cross-network group which may have members of network A, network D, and network E as members of the group. The members of network A, network D, and network E within the group may then share resource of the newly formed group.

FIG. **3** illustrates another embodiment of an example linking structure **300** and resource sharing between three networks. Network A and network D are linked together by link **302**, network A and network E are linked together by link **304**, and network D and network E are linked together by link **306**. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **3**, network A, network D and network E have all agreed to share selected resources and to allow members of the networks thus linked to form groups. Accordingly, a group **308** may be formed between members of network D and network E having a common interest or characteristic. In at least one embodiment, an administrator may then invite selected members of network A, network D, and network E to join the group. In a particular embodiment, an administrator may create a group and inform other existing networks that the group is available for membership requests. Similarly, a group **310** may be formed between members of network A and network E and a group **312** may be formed between members of network A, network D and network E. Each of the groups **308**, **310** and **312** may be comprised of members of the various networks based on one or more factors selected by a group administrator to form the common nexus for each group. For example, one group may be formed only of members who are CEOs of their respective organizations. Another group may be formed of members whose children attend the same school. Another group could be formed of members that are on the same membership committee, board of directors, contractor group, or consultant group.

FIG. **4** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure **400** for sign up of a user on the central network **102**. In step **402**, a user who wishes to sign on the central network **102** initiates a sign up request. In a particular embodiment, the user initiates the sign up request by accessing the server **104** using a communication device such as a personal computer or mobile communication device. In a particular embodiment, the user accesses a website associated with the server **104** using a browser application. In step **404**, a registration page is received from the server **104** and presented to the user. In step **406**, the user completes the registration page received from the server and the registration page is sent back to the server **104**. Completion of the registration page by the user may include providing one or more information fields such as the full name of the user, a username, an email address, an address, a phone number or any other requested information. Upon completion of the registration page by the user, the server **104** generates an activation Universal Resource Locator (URL). In step **410**, the server **104** sends an activation message containing the activation URL to the user. In a particular embodiment, the activation message is an email message which is sent to the email address associated with the user that the user provided during the registration process. In some embodiments, the email may further include the username associated with the user and a temporary password assigned to the user and any other information that is deemed relevant. In still other embodiments, the activation message may be a text message.

In step **412**, the user initiates an activation response by activating the activations URL in the activation message. In a particular embodiment, the initiation of the activation response includes the user clicking the URL contained within the email message. In step **414**, an activation response message is sent to the server **104**. In step **416**, the user account associated with the user is activated in response to receiving the activation response message. In one embodiment, the activation URL may be verified by the server **104** to ensure that the activation response message originated from the user. In step **418**, the server **104** generates an activation confirmation message, and in step **420**, the server **104** sends the activation confirmation message to the user. In a particular embodiment, the activation confirmation message is an email addressed to the user's email address. In a particular embodi-

ment, the activation confirmation message may include a user name and password associated with the user. In step **422**, the user logs in to the server **104** using the user name and password. At step **424**, the user is prompted to change the temporary password provided in the activation confirmation message. In step **426**, the user changes the temporary password to the user's desired password. In step **428**, the procedure **400** ends. Upon sign up of the user on the central network **102**, the user may subsequently request membership in one or more networks associated with the central network **102**.

FIG. **5** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure **500** for creating a network within the central network **102**. In step **502**, a registered user of the central network **102** initiates a request to create a network. In a particular embodiment, initiation of the request to create a network includes the user logging in to the server **104**, receiving a member profile page associated with the user, and selecting a menu item corresponding to the creation of a network from the member profile page. In step **504**, a registration type selection is displayed to the user. The registration type indicates the type of network that is desired to created by the user. Each registration type may include different resources and other features that may be associated with the particular registration type. For example, a basic registration type may be limited to maintaining a membership list or directory and the posting of upcoming events on a network home page. Some other registration types may include support for maintaining blogs, groups, forums, newsletters, announcements, email, linking of networks, payment gateways, yellow pages and online networking Different registration types may also have varying costs associated therewith. For example, a registration type that is free may include only basic capabilities and may include ads in the network pages. Various embodiments may also include different payment plans that are created to include or exclude certain features in a created network. In step **506**, the registration type is selected by the user.

In step **508**, a network information form is displayed to the user. In step **510**, the user enters network information details into the network information form. The network information details may include a network name, a short name for the network, a registration type, a description of the network, a logo for the network, a URL, an address, zip code, city, state, country, ethnicity, language, phone number, a directory type, and network administrator details. In a particular embodiment, an administrator may remove or add additional information fields or any other information that is deemed relevant that is to be received from the user, and these additional fields that may be designated as either mandatory or optional for filing out. The network type may include whether the network is a corporation, business/professional, social/cultural, faith-based, or other type of network. The directory type may include whether the network is a business or personal directory of members. The network administrator details may include the first name, last name, email address and title of the administrator of the particular network. In at least one embodiment, the network administrator is by default the user that creates the network. In step **512**, a review page is displayed to the user that allows the user to review all of the network information details that the user has entered. In step **514**, the user is prompted to confirm the network information details entry. In step **516**, if the user does not accept the network information details entry, the procedure returns to step **510**. If the entries are accepted in step **516**, the procedure **500** continues to step **518** in which another confirmation page is displayed. At step **520**, the user is prompted for confirmation once again. In step **522**, if the user does not confirm, the procedure **500** returns to step **510**. In step **522**, if the user does confirm, the procedure **500** continues to step **524**.

In step **524**, a message to the network creator is generated indicating that the requested network is pending for approval. In this particular embodiment, the network creator is the user initiating the request. In a particular embodiment, the message is an email addressed to the user. In step **526**, an approval request message is generated which is addressed to a super administrator of the central network **102**. In step **528**, the approval request is added to a pending approval list associated with the super administrator for subsequent approval, which will be described with respect to FIG. **6**. In step **530**, the procedure **500** ends. In still other embodiments, the requested network may be automatically approved without requiring action by a super administrator.

FIG. **6** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure **600** for approving creation of a network within the central network **102** by a super administrator of the central network **102**. In step **602**, the super administrator initiates a request to retrieve a homepage of the super administrator from the server **104**. In a particular embodiment, the retrieval is performed by the super administrator logging in to the server **104**. In step **604**, the super administrator's homepage is displayed. In step **606**, the super administrator selects a managed network menu from the homepage. In step **608**, a list of managed networks associated with the super administrator is retrieved from the server **104**, and in step **610**, the list of managed networks is displayed to the user. In step **612**, the pending approval list is retrieved from the server **104**, and in step **614**, the pending approval list is displayed to the super administrator. In step **616**, the super administrator may be provided with the option of deleting an existing approved network displayed in the list of managed networks if the super administrator no longer wishes for the existing approved network to exist. If the super administrator chooses to delete an existing approved network, the existing network that was selected for deletion by the super administrator is deleted in step **618**. In step **620**, a confirmation message indicating that the existing approved network has been deleted is sent to the network administrator of the deleted network. In step **622**, a confirmation that the existing network has been deleted is sent to the super administrator, and in step **624**, the procedure **600** ends.

If in step **616**, the super administrator chooses not to delete an existing approved network, the procedure continues to step **626**. In step **626**, the super administrator selects a pending network request from the approval list. In step **628**, the super administrator may choose to approve the pending network request if the super administrator wishes to allow creation of the network. If the super administrator does not approve the pending network request, the super administrator is prompted to confirm such disapproval in step **630**. If the super administrator does not confirm in step **630**, the procedure returns to step **626**. If the super administrator confirms the rejection of the pending network request in step **630**, the pending network request is rejected in step **632** and the procedure continues to step **620** in which confirmation of the rejection is sent to the network administrator. In step **622**, confirmation of the rejection is sent to the super administrator, and in step **624**, the procedure **600** ends.

If in step **628** the super administrator approves the pending network request, the super administrator is prompted to confirm in step **634**. If the super administrator does not confirm the procedure **600** returns to step **626**. If the super administrator does confirm in step **634**, the procedure **600** continues to step **636** in which the network is approved and the pending network is created. The procedure **600** continues to step **620** in which confirmation of approval is sent to the network

administrator. In step **622**, confirmation of approval is sent to the super administrator, and in step **624**, the procedure ends. In still other embodiments, the requested network may be automatically created without requiring approval by a super administrator.

FIG. **7** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure **700** for requesting network membership by a user. In step **702**, the user initiates a request for network membership by logging in to the server **104**. In step **704**, the network homepage is retrieved, and in step **706**, the network homepage is displayed to the user including a list of networks to which the user may request membership. In step **708**, the user selects a request for network membership in a particular network, and in step **710**, the membership request is sent to the network administrator associated with the network. In step **712**, the membership request is queued for later approval or rejection by the network administrator. In step **714**, the network administrator may choose to either approve or reject the request for network membership by the user. If the network administrator rejects the request, a refusal message is sent to the user in step **716**. In a particular embodiment, the refusal message may be an email addressed to the user. In step **732**, the procedure ends.

If in step **714**, the network administrator approves the request for network membership from the user, the user is added to the network's member list. In step **720**, an activation URL is generated. In step **722**, permissions that are desired to be given to the user are created and associated with the activation URL. Permissions include network resources to which the new user will be given access. In step **724**, an activation message with the URL contained therein is sent to the user. In a particular embodiment, the activation message is sent as an email. In step **726**, the user selects the activation URL within the activation message. In step **728**, the server **104** performs an access check on the URL to determine that the activation URL returned from the user is valid. In step **730**, if access is not granted, the procedure **700** continues to step **732** in which the procedure **700** ends. If in step **730** access is granted, the user's membership in the network is activated in step **734**, and the procedure continues to step **732** and ends. Accordingly, the user now has membership in the network and has access to the resources permitted by the user permissions.

FIG. **8** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure **800** for configuring a network by a network administrator. At step **802**, the network administrator initiates configuration of a network by logging into the server **104**. In step **804**, a list of approved networks of the network administrator is displayed to the network administrator. In step **806**, the administrator selects the network to be configured from the list of approved networks. In step **808**, a network configuration page is displayed. In step **810**, the network administrator selects a member configuration menu from the network configuration page. The member configuration menu is used to set the type of membership of members that will be allowed to join the network. In step **812**, the member configuration page is displayed. In step **814**, the network administrator selects a member type to be associated with the network. In the particular embodiment illustrated in FIG. **8**, the member type may either be an individual member type or a business member type. An individual member type captures only the personal information from a member's profile for display to other members of the network. In some embodiments, individual member types may cause member profiles to be displayed in one or more personal directories on the particular network and or on other networks linked to the particular network. A business member type captures personal and business information, such as the name of the member's employer, from the member profile for display to the other members of the network. In addition, business member types may in some embodiments cause member profiles to be displayed in one or more business directories on the particular network or on other networks linked to the particular network. In step **816**, the network administrator defines a name for the selected member type, a payment amount, and a number of allowed members in the selected member type. The payment amount indicates a cost for a member to subscribe to the particular network. The duration indicates the length of the member's membership. Based on the date of joining the network, each member's membership is defined with a start and end date. A reminder to renew the membership may be automatically generated and sent to the member's email at periodic intervals and/or at a predetermined number of days prior to expiration of the member's membership in the network. These parameters may be determined by the network administrator.

Upon membership expiration, the status of the member converts to that of a non-member. This means that the member no longer has access to any of the member-only resources of the network. In some embodiments, the non-member may be granted permission to continue to access some of the member-only resources. A non-member remains a registered user on the central network **102**. In some embodiments, a non-member may be restricted to certain resources such as remaining on an email distribution list of the network or receiving text messages from the network. In addition, a particular user can have different roles and statuses in different networks. For example, a user could be an administrator of one network, a member of another network and a non-member of a third network. A non-member can then apply for or renew membership in a particular network. Resources offered by the network cease to be available to a non-member as well as all related groups of the network. In addition, linked networks that have a precondition of membership to the network to which the user is now a non-member are also unavailable.

In step **818**, a member field selection page is displayed. The member field selection indicates the information fields of a member's profile are desired to be a captured by the particular network. In step **820**, the network administrator selects the data field from the member's profile that will be used by the network. In addition, the network administrator may indicate particular fields which are mandatory to be filled out by a member of the network and indicate other fields in which filling out of the information is optional. In step **822**, the network administrator may select whether he or she wishes to select additional member types to be added to the network. For example, the network administrator may configure multiple member types for each network in which each member type has different privileges. If in step **822** the network administrator indicates that he or she wishes to add additional member types, the procedure **800** returns to step **814**. If the network administrator indicates in step **822** that no additional member types are desired, the procedure continues to step **824** at which the procedure **800** ends. After the network is configured by the network administrator, members may request to join the newly configured network.

FIG. **9** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure **900** for allowing a network administrator to manage members of a network. Through member management, the network administrator can edit member data or delete the member from a particular network. In step **902**, the network administrator initiates member management by logging into the server **104**. In step **904**, the network administrator selects a manage network menu from a network administrator's homepage. In step **906**, member data for a selected network is retrieved which includes a list of users who are members of the selected

network. In step **908**, the member list for the selected network is displayed. In step **910**, the network administrator selects a member to edit or delete from the member list. In step **912**, it is determined whether the network administrator selected an edit or delete option. If the network administrator selects to edit a member, the procedure **900** continues to step **914** in which a member edit page is displayed. In step **916**, the network administrator may then edit the member data associated with the selected member. For example, the network administrator may change permissions for the member or edit personal data associated with the member. In step **918**, the updated member data is stored, and in step **920** a confirmation message is sent to the edited member indicating that his member profile has been edited by the network administrator. In step **922**, the procedure **900** ends.

If in step **912**, the network administrator selected to delete a member, at step **924**, a network administrator is prompted for confirmation. In step **926**, it is determined whether the network administrator confirmed deletion. If the network administrator did not confirm deletion, the procedure returns to step **908**. If the network administrator confirms deletion, the procedure continues to step **928** in which the member is deleted from the network. In step **930**, a confirmation message is sent to the deleted member indicating that he or she has been deleted from the network by the network administrator. In step **932**, a confirmation message is sent to the network administrator indicating that the deleted member has been deleted. In step **922**, the procedure **900** ends.

FIG. **10** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure **1000** for a network administrator or super administrator to add new members to a network. In step **1002**, a network administrator of a particular network or a super administrator of the central network **102** logs in to the server **104** and selects a managed network from a homepage. In step **1004**, the network administrator or super administrator selects an add new members page from a menu. In step **1006**, the add new members page is displayed. In step **1008**, the network administrator or super administrator is prompted to select whether single member add or bulk member add is desired. With the single member add option, the network administrator may add one member at a time to the network. With the bulk member add option, the network administrator may add a number of members to the network at one time.

In step **1010**, it is determined whether single or bulk member add was selected. If singe member add was selected, the procedure continues to step **1012** in which a single add member page is displayed. In step **1014**, the network administrator or super administrator enters member information associated with the new member that is desired to be added. In step **1016**, the new member's email address is checked for validity. In step **1018**, it is determined whether the new member's email address has been validated. If the new member's email address has not been validated, the procedure returns to step **1014**. If the new member's email address has been validated, the procedure continues to step **1020** in which mandatory fields of the member profile are checked for validity. In step **1022** it is determined whether the mandatory fields have been verified. If the mandatory fields have not been verified, the procedure returns to step **1014**. If the mandatory fields have been verified, the procedure continues to step **1024**. In step **1024**, an activation URL is generated, and in step **1026**, the activation URL is sent to the new member. In a particular embodiment, the activation URL is sent to the new member in an email message. The new member may subsequently activate the activation URL in order to confirm membership to the network. In step **1028**, the procedure ends.

If it is determined in step **1010** that bulk member add is desired, the procedure continues to step **1030**. In step **1030**, a template for new members is generated. In a particular embodiment, the template may include a spreadsheet in which the network administrator fills out the information fields associated members to be added. In step **1032**, the template is populated with member data associated with a plurality of new members by the network administrator. In step **1034**, the populated template is uploaded to the server **104**. In step **1036**, the email address for each new member is checked for validity. In step **1038**, it is determined whether the email addresses for each member has been validated. If one or more of the email addresses has not been validated, the procedure continues to step **1040**. In step **1040**, an error message is displayed indicating the one or more invalid email addresses and the procedure continues to step **1028** in which the procedure ends. The network administrator may then edit the incorrect email address information and try again. If the email addresses are validated, the procedure continues to step **1042** in which the mandatory fields are checked. In step **1044**, it is determined whether the mandatory fields are verified. If the mandatory fields are not verified, the procedure continues to step **1040** in which an error message indicating which mandatory fields are not valid is generated and displayed, and the procedure ends at step **1028**. The network administrator may then edit the incorrect data and try again. If the mandatory fields are verified, the procedure continues to step **1046** in which the membership data from the populated template is uploaded to the server **104**. In step **1048**, an activation URL is generated for each new member, and in step **1050**, the activation URL is sent to each new member. In step **1028**, the procedure ends. When each new member activates the activation URL, the new member will be added to the network.

FIG. **11** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure **1100** for creation of a group associated with one or more networks. A group allows one or more members in the same network or in linked networks to be joined together for a common purpose, interact with one another, and share resources with one another. In step **1102**, a network administrator or other user that has permission to create groups within a particular network initiates a request to create a group. In a particular embodiment, the initiation of the request to create the group may include the network administrator or other user logging in to the server **104**. In step **1104**, a group's page associated with a selected network is retrieved from the server **104**. In step **1106**, the network group page is displayed. In step **1108**, the network administrator or authorized user selects a create group menu. In step **1110**, a group definition page is displayed. In step **1112**, the network administrator or authorized user defines the new group as either a private or public group. A private group is restricted to certain members of the central network **102**. A public group allows any member of the central network **102** to send a request to join the group. In step **1114**, it is determined whether the network administrator or user selected a private or public group. If the network administrator or user selects a private group, the procedure continues to step **1116** in which the new group is defined as a "by invitation only." The by invitation only group may be joined only by members that have been invited to join the group by the network administrator or authorized user. The procedure then continues to step **1118**. If it is determined in step **1114** that the group has been designated as a public group, the procedure continues to step **1120** in which the network administrator or authorized user is prompted to define whether approval rights are required for the public group. By selecting approval rights, any member of the network may request joining the group. However, the by approval group

requires approval of the network administrator or authorized user before the member is allowed to join. In step **1122**, it is determined whether the network administrator or authorized user selected approval rights. If approval rights are selected, the procedure continues to step **1124** in which the new group is defined as a "by approval" group. The procedure then continues to step **1118**. If in step **1122**, the network administrator or authorized user determines that no approval rights are required, the new group is defined as a public group in step **1126**. A public group allows any member of the network to become a part of the group. The procedure **1100** then continues to step **1118**.

In step **1118**, a define networks menu is displayed to the network administrator or user. The define networks menu allows the network administrator or user to determine whether he or she wishes to link additional linked networks to the new group. This allows the network administrator to grant permission of certain members of another linked network to join the group. In step **1128**, it is determined whether the linking of additional linked networks to the group are desired. If additional networks are not desired to be linked to the new group, the procedure continues to step **1130**. In step **1130**, the group is created as a network members only group and the procedure continues to step **1132**. In step **1132**, the network administrator or user may set permitted member parameters associated with the new group. The permitted member parameters indicate required characteristics of a member before they are allowed to join the group. For example, the network administrator or authorized user may determine that only members who are CEOs of their respective organizations may join the new group. In step **1134**, a confirmation message indicating creation of a new group is sent to the network administrator, and in step **1136**, the procedure **1100** ends. If it is determined that in step **1128** that the linking of additional networks is desired, the procedure continues to step **1138**. In step **1138**, a list of linked networks is displayed. These linked networks are networks that have been linked to the present network. In step **1140**, the network administrator or authorized user may select which of the linked networks are to be included in the new group. The procedure then continues to step **1132** in which permitted member parameters are set, step **1134** in which a confirmation message is sent to the administrator, and the procedure ends at step **1136**.

FIG. **12** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure **1200** for designating a secondary administrator of a network by an administrator of a network. By designating a secondary administrator, the network administrator may give designated network management capabilities to another member of the network. In step **1202**, a network administrator initiates a secondary administrator role setup by logging in to the server **104**. In step **1204**, a role setting page is retrieved from the server **104**. In step **1206**, the role setting page is displayed to the network administrator. In step **1208**, the members of a selected network are retrieved, and in step **1210**, the list of members of the selected network is displayed. In step **1212**, the network administrator selects one or more members to be assigned as a secondary administrator of the selected network. In step **1214**, the selected members are assigned as secondary administrators. In step **1216**, the network administrator selects one of the secondary administrators' profiles, and in step **1218**, the selected secondary administrator's member profile is displayed. In step **1220**, the network administrator selects modules and/or resources to be assigned to the secondary administrator. The assigned modules/resources are those modules or resources to which the secondary administrator is to be granted access and administration rights. In step **1222**, the assigned modules/resources are assigned to the secondary administrator, and in step **1224**, a confirmation message is sent to the secondary administrator indicating the member's assignment as the secondary administrator. In step **1226**, the procedure **1200** ends.

FIG. **13** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure **1300** for managing of a network group. Management of a network group allows a primary network administrator or a secondary administrator to edit content available to group members and assign group members as moderators of the group. In step **1302**, the primary network administrator or secondary administrator logs into the server **104**. In step **1304**, a list of groups within the network is retrieved from the server **104**. In step **1306**, the list of networks groups within the network is displayed. In step **1308**, the primary network or secondary administrator selects a network group to edit. In step **1310**, a network group edit page is selected. In step **1312**, an option is presented to either edit content of the group or change a moderator of the group. In step **1314**, it is determined whether the primary network or secondary administrator chose to edit content or change the moderator. If the edit content option is chosen, the procedure continues to step **1316** in which a group content edit page is displayed. In step **1318**, the primary network administrator or secondary administrator edits group content. Editing of group content may include adding or deleting of resources such as event schedules, blogs, forums, foreign topics, announcements, newsletters and other resources associated with the group. In step **1320**, the editing content is stored, and in step **1322**, procedure **1300** ends. If in step **1314**, the change moderator option has been selected, the procedure continues to step **1324** in which a member list of the group is retrieved. A group moderator has the capability to edit selected content of the group such as editing or deleting forum posts or adding new content to the group. In step **1326**, a member list is displayed. In step **1328**, a member from the member list is selected by the primary network administrator or secondary administrator to be assigned as the moderator of the group. In step **1330**, the selected member is changed to or assigned as the moderator of the group. In step **1332**, a URL is generated to the new moderator, and in step **1334**, a message containing the URL is sent to the new moderator. The new moderator may later click on the URL to confirm that they wish to be added as the moderator. In step **1322**, the procedure **1300** ends.

FIG. **14** illustrates the embodiment of a procedure **1400** for creating a forum for member discussion within a network or group. A forum allows members of a network or a group to discuss various topics of conversation among each other. In step **1402**, a network administrator or secondary administrator initiates a request to create a forum by logging in to the server **104** and selecting a forum menu. In step **1404**, a forum page is retrieved from the server **104**, and in step **1406**, the forum page is displayed. In step **1408**, the administrator selects forum creation option, and in step **1410**, a forum create page is displayed. In step **1412**, the administrator defines a forum name and forum description indicating the subject matter to which discussion in the forum is to be directed. In step **1414**, the forum is created. In step **1416**, the network administrator or secondary administrator selects an option to create a forum topic within the forum. A forum topic is a discussion area within a forum which is addressed to a particular issue. Each forum may have a number of forum topics contained within it. In step **1418**, a forum topic page is displayed. In step **1420**, the network administrator or secondary administrator defines a topic name and topic description for the forum topic, and in step **1422**, the forum topic is created. In step **1424**, the network administrator or secondary administrator may be prompted to indicate whether he or she wishes

to modify the created forum topic. If the network administrator or secondary administrator does not wish to modify the created forum topic, the procedure continues to step **1426** in which the procedure ends. If the network administrator or secondary administrator indicates that he or she wishes to modify the created forum topic, the procedure continues to step **1428** in which the network administrator or secondary administrator is prompted to select either to delete a comment in the forum topic, edit a comment in the forum topic or add a comment to the forum topic. In step **1430**, it is determined whether the network administrator or secondary administrator selected delete, edit or add a comment. If deletion of a comment was selected, the procedure continues to step **1432** in which the comment for deletion is selected by the network administrator or the secondary administrator. In step **1434**, the network administrator or secondary administrator is prompted to confirm deletion. If deletion is not confirmed in step **1434**, the delete is canceled and the procedure continues to step **1426** and ends. If deletion is confirmed in step **1434**, the selected comment is deleted from the forum topic in step **1438**, and the procedure continues to step **1426** and ends.

If addition of a comment was selected in step **1430**, the procedure continues to step **1440** in which an add a comment page is retrieved. In step **1442**, the comment page is displayed. In step **1444**, the network administrator or secondary administrator may define a title and content of a new comment, and in step **1446**, the comment is saved. In step **1448**, the comment is posted to the forum topic and the procedure continues to step **1426** and ends.

If in step **1430** edit comment was selected, the procedure continues to step **1450** in which an edit comment page is retrieved. In step **1452**, the edit page is displayed. In step **1454**, the comment to be edited is selected. For example, the network administrator or secondary administrator may wish to edit a comment to remove objectionable content. In step **1456**, the comment is edited by the network administrator or secondary administrator. In step **1458**, the edited comment is saved to the forum topic. The procedure then continues to step **1426** and ends. In other embodiments, other types of resources, such as announcements or blogs, may be created in a similar manner, and different permissions could be set for each of the resources.

FIG. **15** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure **1500** for linking a first network to a second network. The linking of the first network to the second network allows selected resources of the first network to be shared with selected members of the second network. In step **1502**, an administrator of network N**1** initiates a link request by logging into the server **104** and selecting a network linking option. In step **1504**, a network linking menu is retrieved from the server **104**. In step **1506**, the network linking menu is displayed to the administrator of network N**1**. In step **1508**, the administrator of network N**1** selects network N**2** among a list of possible networks for linking. In step **1510**, a linking request to link to network N**2** is generated and queued. In step **1512**, the linking request is sent to the administrator of network N**2**. In step **1514**, the administrator of network N**2** is prompted for approval of the linking request. In step **1516**, it is determined whether the network administrator of network N**2** approved the linking request from network N**1**. If the request is not approved, the procedure continues to step **1518** in which a rejection message is sent to the administrator of network N**1**, and the procedure ends in step **1520**. If the administrator of network N**2** approves the linking request, the procedure continues to step **1522**. In step **1522**, network N**1** is added to network N**2**'s approved linked network list. In step **1524**, an acceptance message is sent to the administrator of network N**1** indicating that the linking request has been selected. In step **1526**, selected network N**1** resources as determined by the administrator of network N**1** are shared with members of network N**2**. In step **1528**, network N**2** is added to network N**1**'s linked network list. In step **1520**, the procedure ends. In various embodiments, the administrator of network N**2** may designate the members of network N**2** that will have access to the resources of network N**1**. In addition, in various embodiments the administrator of network N**2** may designate which of the offered resources of network N**1** will be available to members of network N**2**. If network N**2** wishes to share selected resources with members of network N**1**, the administrator of network N**2** will initiate a link request in a similar manner. In still other embodiments, upon approval of a network request from network N**1** to network N**2**, selected resources in network N**2** may be set to automatically be shared with members of network N**1**. In other embodiments, the resources need not be selected at the time of linking of network N**1** and network N**2**. Instead, the selection of resources for sharing may be performed at a different time.

FIG. **16** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure **1600** for resource sharing between linked networks. Sharing of resources between linked networks allows members of each linked network to collaborate or share information about a common interest or goal. In step **1602**, an administrator of network N**1** initiates a resource sharing request by logging into the server **104** and selecting a network linking option from a menu. In step **1604**, a network leading page is retrieved from the menu, and in step **1606**, the linking page with a list of available resources R**1**-Rn is displayed. In step **1608**, the administrator of network N**1** selects one or more resources R**1**-Rn of network N**1** to share with network N**2**. In step **1610**, the administrator of network N**1** defines access permissions for the shared resources. The access permissions may include the types of members of network N**2** that will be allowed to access the various resources. In other embodiments, the administrator may deny access permission to a particular member, or a member having particular characteristics, regardless of the network to which he or she belongs, even if the member is allowed access by another network of which he or she is a member. In still other embodiments, a particular resource may be designated as being publicly shared with any member of a network within the central network **102**.

At step **1612**, a request message for sharing the selected resources with members of network N**2** is sent to the administrator of network N**2**. In step **1614**, the administrator of network N**2** is prompted to approve the request for the sharing of resources with network N**1**. In step **1616**, it is determined whether the administrator of network of N**2** approved the request. If it is determined in step **1616** that the network administrator of network N**2** did not approve their request, the procedure continues to step **1618** in which a refusal message is sent to the administrator of network N**1** indicating that the request for shared resources has been denied. In step **1620**, the procedure ends. If in step **1616** it is determined that the administrator of network N**2** approved the shared resource request, the procedure continues to step **1622** in which the selected resources of network N**1** are added to network N**2**'s shared resources. In step **1624**, network N**2** members are allowed to access the selected resources of network N**1**, and in step **1620**, the procedure **1600** ends. In some embodiments, the sharing of the resources of network N**1** with members of network N**2** may include only viewing or accessing the shared resources by members of network N**2**. In still other embodiments, the sharing of resources of network N**1** with members of network N**2** may include the ability to edit or modify as well as access the shared resources of network N**1**. In various

embodiments, an administrator can remove access to a particular resource from members of network N2 without revoking the link between network N1 and network N2.

FIG. **17** illustrates an embodiment of a procedure **1700** for revocation of a linked network. An administrator of a particular network may wish to revoke a link with another network in a situation in which collaboration between the networks is no longer desired by the administrator. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **17**, network N1 is linked to network N2, and network N1 shares selected resources with members of network N2. In step **1702**, an administrator of either network N1 or network N2 initiates an unlink request by logging in to the server **104** and selecting a network linking menu. In step **1704**, the network linking menu is retrieved from the server **104**, and in step **1706** the network linking menu is displayed. The network linking menu shows a list of other networks to which the network is currently linked. In step **1708**, the administrator selects the link to be revoked from the linked network list. In step **1710**, the selected link between network N1 and N2 is revoked. In step **1712**, a revocation message is sent to the other network administrator, that is the administrator that did not initiate the un-linking procedure. In step **1714**, access to linked resources provided by network N1 are removed from access by members of network N2. In step **1716**, the procedure **1700** ends. Upon revocation of the link between network N1 and network N2, the members of network N2 no longer have access to the shared resources of network N1.

One or more advantages of at least one embodiment of the present invention may include, but are not limited to, gaining of synergy as a result of members of a network being linked to other networks at the organizational level controlled by settings for the sharing of information, privileges, processes, databases, etc.; conduct business; communicate with each other for social, economic, religious, medical benefit, and/or based on a common interest, purpose, need, race, color, religion, age, gender, disability, military status, sex, pregnancy, language, nation of origin or any other reason.

It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art having the benefit of this disclosure that various embodiments provide a system and method for linking together of two or more individual networks, and facilitating the sharing of resources associated with the individual networks with members of other linked networks. It should be understood that the drawings and detailed description herein are to be regarded in an illustrative rather than a restrictive manner, and are not intended to be limiting to the particular forms and examples disclosed. On the contrary, included are any further modifications, changes, rearrangements, substitutions, alternatives, design choices, and embodiments apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art, without departing from the spirit and scope hereof, as defined by the following claims. Thus, it is intended that the following claims be interpreted to embrace all such further modifications, changes, rearrangements, substitutions, alternatives, design choices, and embodiments.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of linking a first network to a second and disparate network comprising:

each of the first and second networks defined by a unique Universal Resource Locator (URL) and each having resources uniquely associated therewith and each administered by a network centric administrator and able to each have a plurality of members uniquely associated therewith with defined network access rights to the respective network and each of the first and second networks able to create a network-to-network link to the other;

the network centric administrator for the first network sending, by the first network having at least one first member associated therewith, a link request message to the second network having at least one second member associated therewith, the link request message including a request to establish a network-to-network link with the second network, the first network further including at least one of the resources associated therewith accessible by the at least one first member;

the network centric administrator for the second network generating an acceptance message and the network centric administrator for the first network receiving the acceptance message from the second network at the first network;

establishing a first network-to-network link between the first network and the second network in response to receiving the acceptance message; and

sharing access to the at least one resource on the second network to the at least one first member of the first network over the network-to-network link, such that the at least second member of the second network can access the at least one resource on the first network, but no access being granted to the at least one second member on the second network to any resources on the first network by way of the acceptance message generated by the network centric administrator for the second network.

2. The method of claim **1**, further comprising:

selecting by the network centric administrator for the first network the at least one resource associated with the first network;

sending a request for sharing of the at least one resource to the second network; and

approving by the network centric administrator for the first network sharing of the at least one resource to the at least one second member by the second network.

3. The method of claim **1**, further comprising:

revoking by the network centric administrator for the first network of the at least one link between the first network and the second network; and

removing access to the at least one resource to the at least one second member.

4. The method of claim **1**, further comprising:

forming a first group; and

adding one or more of the at least one first member and the at least one second member into the first group.

5. The method of claim **4**, further comprising:

sharing by the network centric administrator for the first network access to the at least one resource to the members of the first group.

6. The method of claim **1**, wherein the sending of the link request message to the second network is initiated by the network centric administrator for the first network which consists of the group of an administrator, super administrator, or the at least one first member of the first network.

7. The method of claim **1**, further comprising:

defining by the network centric administrator for the first network an access permission for the at least one resource, wherein the sharing of access to the at least one resource is based upon the access permission.

8. The method of claim **1**, further comprising:

denying by the respective one of the network centric administrator for the first or second network access to a particular member of the at least one resource regardless of a network membership of the particular member.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

establishing by the network centric administrator for the second network a second link between the second network and the first network.

10. The method of claim 9, further comprising:

sharing by the network centric administrator for the second network access to at least one resource associated with the second network to the at least one first member of the first network.

11. A system for linking a first network to a second network comprising:

a first network;

a second network; and

a server;

wherein each of the first and second networks defined by a unique Universal Resource Locator (URL) and each having resources uniquely associated therewith and each administered by a network centric administrator and able to each have a plurality of members uniquely associated therewith with defined network access rights for the respective network and each of the first and second networks able to create a network-to-network link to the other;

the first network having at least one first member uniquely associated therewith, the first network further including at least one shared resource uniquely associated therewith and accessible by the at least one first member;

the second network having at least one second member uniquely associated therewith; and

the server in communication with the first network and the second network,

receive from the network centric administrator for the first network a link request message, the link request message including a request to establish a link between the first network and the second network;

send the link request message to the network centric administrator for the second network;

receive from the network centric administrator for the second network an acceptance message from the second network;

send the acceptance message to the network centric administrator for the first network;

establish a first network-to-network link between the first network and the second network by the network centric administrator for the first network in response to receiving the acceptance message from the server; and

share access to the at least one resource on the first network to the at least one second member of the second network, but no access being granted to the at least one second member on the second network to any resources on the first network by way of the acceptance message generated by the network centric administrator for the second network.

12. The system of claim 11, wherein the server is further configured to:

receive from the network centric administrator for the first network a selection of the at least one resource associated with the first network;

send a request for sharing of the at least one resource to the network centric administrator for the second network; and

receive approval of sharing of the at least one resource to the at least one second member by the second network from the network centric administrator for the first network.

13. The system of claim 11, wherein the server is further configured to:

revoke the at least one link between the first network and the second network; and remove access to the at least one resource to the at least one second member.

14. The system of claim 11, wherein the server is further configured to:

form a first group; and

add one or more of the at least one first member and the at least one second member into the first group.

15. The system of claim 14, wherein the server is further configured to:

share access to the at least one resource to the members of the first group.

16. The system of claim 11, wherein the sending of the link request message to the network centric administrator for the second network is initiated the network centric administrator for the first network consisting of the group of an administrator, super administrator, or member of the first network.

17. The system of claim 11, wherein the server is further configured to:

receive a definition of an access permission for the at least one resource, wherein the sharing of access to the at least one resource is based upon the access permission.

18. The system of claim 11, wherein the server is further configured to:

deny access to a particular member of the at least one resource regardless of a network membership of the particular member.

19. The system of claim 11, wherein the server is further configured to:

establish a second link between the second network and the first network.

20. The system of claim 19, wherein the server is further configured to:

share access to at least one resource associated with the second network to the at least one first member of the first network.

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